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March 20, 2023

SPRING Announcement

INDEPENDENT BOOK
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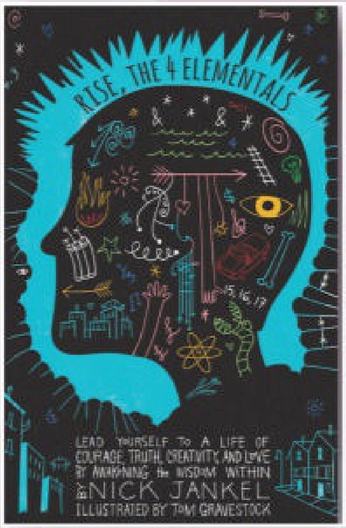
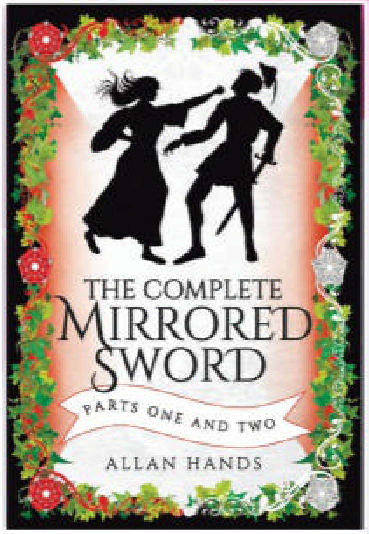
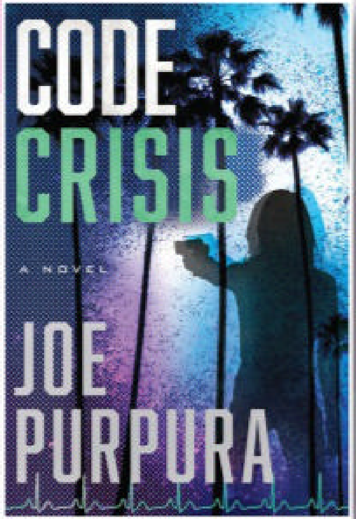
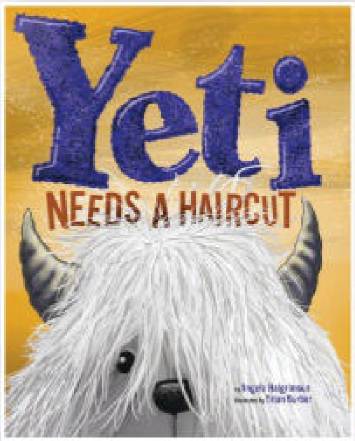
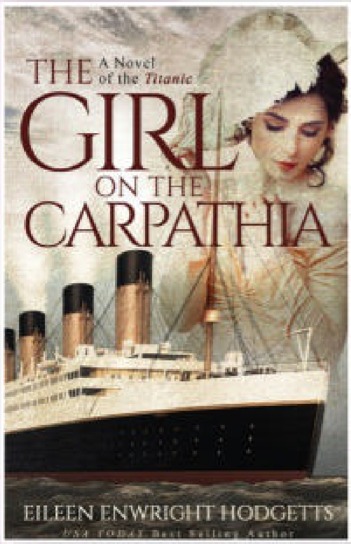
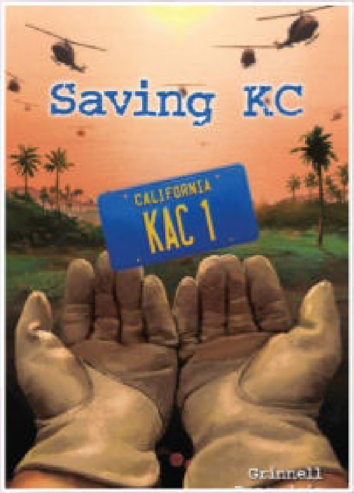

RISE, THE 4 ELEMENTALS
LEAD YOURSELF TO A LIFE OF COURAGE, TRUTH, CREATIVITY, AND LOVE BY AWAKENING THE WISDOM WITHIN
NICK JANKEL
ILLUSTRATED BY TOM GRAVESTOCK


THE COMPLETE MIRRORED SWORD
PARTS ONE AND TWO
ALLAN HANDS


CODE CRISIS
A NOVEL
JOE PURPURA


Yeti
NEEDS A HAIRCUT


THE GIRL ON THE CARPATHIA
A Novel of the Titanic
EILEEN ENWRIGHT HODGETTS
USA TODAY Best Selling Author


Saving KC
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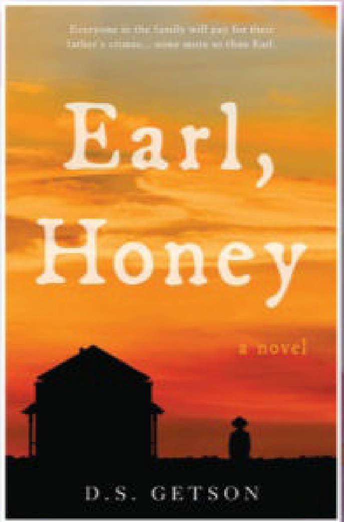
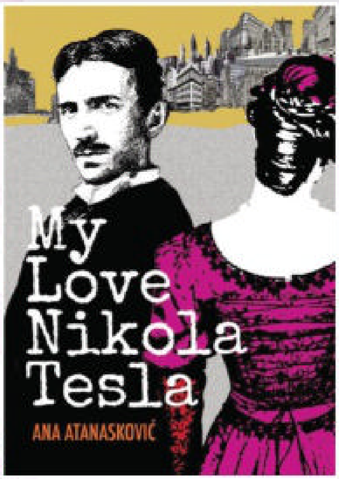
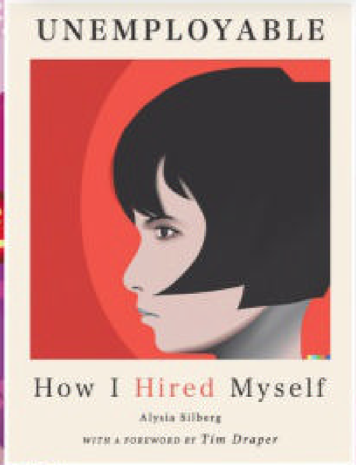
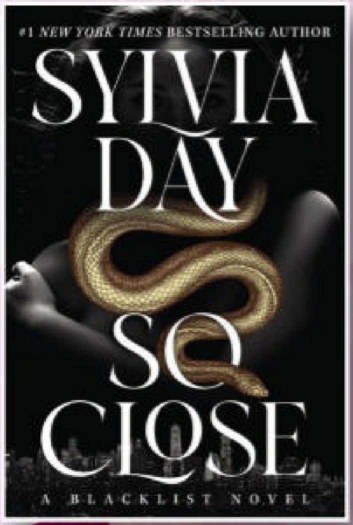
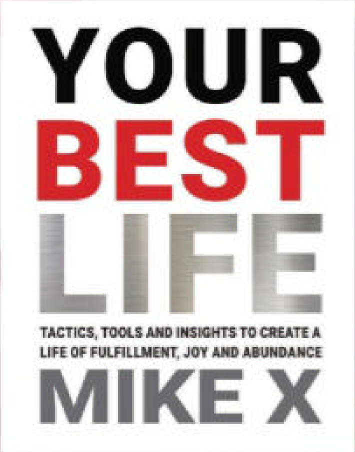
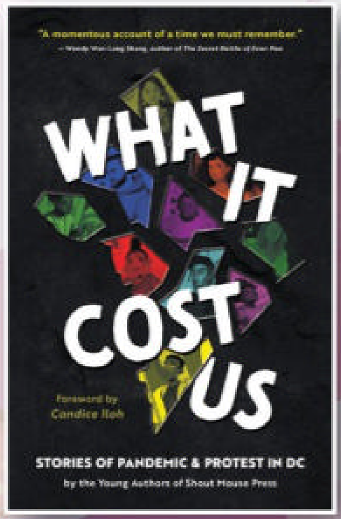

Everyone in the family will pay for their father's crimes... some more so than Earl.
Earl, Honey
a novel
D.S. GETSON

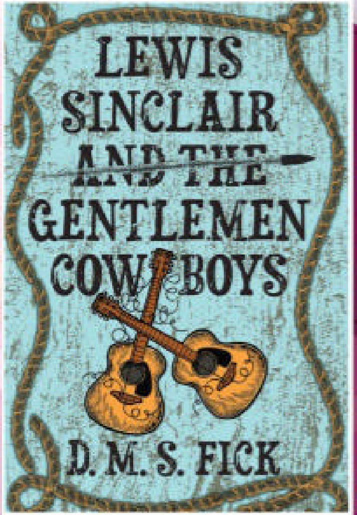

My Love Nikola Tesla
ANA ATANASKOVIĆ

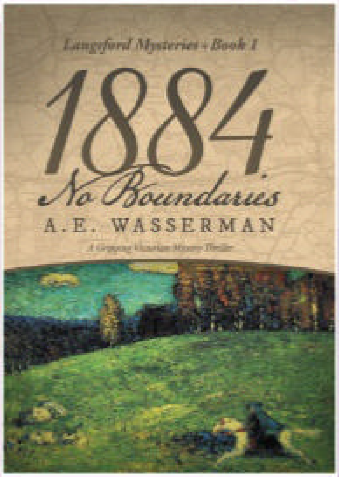

UNEMPLOYABLE
How I Hired Myself
Alysia Silberg
WITH A FOREWORD BY Tim Draper


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SYLVIA DAY
SO CLOSE
A BLACKLIST NOVEL


YOUR BEST LIFE
TACTICS, TOOLS AND INSIGHTS TO CREATE A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT, JOY AND ABUNDANCE
MIKE X


"A momentous account of a time we must remember."
WHAT IT COST US
Foreword by Candice Iloh
STORIES OF PANDEMIC & PROTEST IN DC
by the Young Authors of Shout Mouse Press


LEWIS SINCLAIR ~~AND THE~~ GENTLEMEN COWBOYS
D. M. S. FICK


Langeford Mysteries • Book 1
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A.E. WASSERMAN
A Gripping Victorian Mystery Thriller

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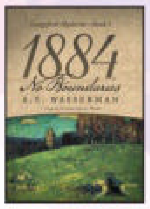

1884 - No Boundaries

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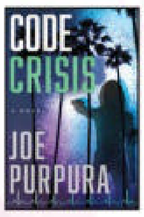
First novel of The Langsford Mysteries: perfect for fans of Sherlock Holmes & Downton Abbey.

9781480816527 • $23.99 • 382 pp.

Available from Ingram, Baker & Taylor, Channel Sales Author Solutions
Archway Publishing • aewasserman.com

THRILLER



Code Crisis

Joe Purpura

“An exquisitely developed, propulsive novel that delivers tension, humor, and magnetic characters in equal measure.”
—T.C. Boyle

9798886450132 • $27.95 • 360 pp.

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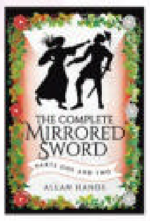
HISTORICAL FICTION / ROMANCE



The Complete Mirrored Sword

Parts One and Two

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Tragicomic romance of epic proportions set in medieval England’s dynastic struggle for power and revenge.

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Allan Hands • allanhands.com

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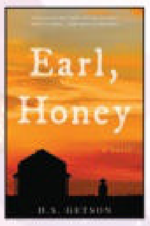


Earl, Honey

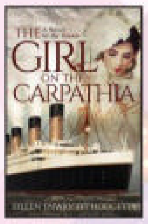
D.S. Getson

A shy, damaged boy seeks redemption in the 1920s rural American South. Also available as an eBook.

9781803131696 • $18.40 (hardcover);
9781803131672 • $13.80 (paperback) • 343 pp.

Available from Ingram Wholesale
Troubador Publishing • troubador.co.uk/bookshop/historical/earl-honey/

HISTORICAL FICTION



The Girl on the Carpathia

A Novel of the Titanic

Eileen Enwright Hodgetts

“Hodgetts’s heartfelt story of Kate and Eva’s crusade adds a worthy chapter to Titanic lore.” —*Publishers Weekly*

9780578903200 • $15.99 • 364 pp.

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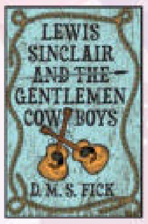
MYSTERY



Lewis Sinclair and the Gentlemen Cowboys

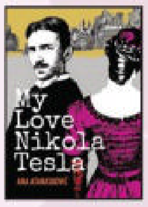
D. M. S. Fick

“This country music mystery hits all the right notes.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

9780744308815 • $26.99 • 404 pp.

Available from IPG, Ingram Wholesale, Baker & Taylor
CamCat Books • camcatpub.com/LewisSinclairandtheGentlemenCowboys

HISTORICAL FICTION



My Love Nikola Tesla

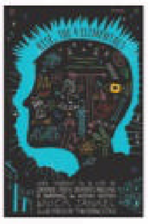
Ana Atanasković

In her bold story of love and commitment, Ana Atanasković rediscovers an unknown side of Nikola Tesla.

979-8-218-06632-1 • $16.99 • 370 pp.

Available from Acutract, Ingram
YU Biblioteka • yubiblioteka.com

TEEN NON-FICTION / PHILOSOPHY



Rise, The Four Elementals

Lead Yourself to a Life of Courage, Truth, Creativity, and Love by Awakening the Wisdom Within

Nick Seneca Jankel (author); Tom Gravestock (illustrator)

Graphic non-fiction by a Fortune 500 coach about how to solve the toughest life problems. [Leadership/Self-Help/Graphic Novels]

9781999731588, $19.99 (paperback);
9781999731595, $9.99 (eBook) • 130 pp.

Available from Ingram • Switch On Books • switchonnow.com/books

HISTORICAL FICTION

Saving KC

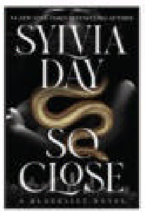
Grinnell Desjarlais

If you are a forever Karen Carpenter fan this will be the one for you.

9781598493252 • $26.95 • 375 pp.

Available from Amazon • Desjarlais Publishing • savingkcthestory.com

MYSTERY / SUSPENSE / THRILLER



So Close

Sylvia Day

A lushly gothic novel of domestic suspense. The new Mrs. Black is identical to the late Mrs. Black. A miracle or madness?

9781626500037 • $29.00 • 326 pp.

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Unemployable: How I Hired Myself

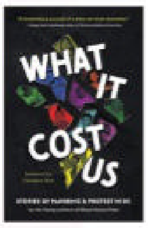
Alysia Silberg

Unbreakable in spirit, unstoppable by nature, unemployable by choice, Alysia Silberg has triumphed over trauma to blaze new trails in Silicon Valley. This is her powerful and inspiring story.

9798350706253, $34.99 (hardcover); 9798350706260, $24.99 (paperback); 9798350706277, $19.99 (eBook) • 148 pp.

Available from Ingram Wholesale, KDP • Street Global LLC • ReadUnemployable.com

YOUNG ADULT FICTION



What It Cost Us: Stories of Pandemic and Protest in DC

The Young Authors of Shout Mouse Press

This novel-in-stories by ten diverse young writers chronicles the historic year of 2020.

9781950807550 • $17.99 • 330 pp.

Available from Ingram, Follet, Baker & Taylor
Shout Mouse Press • shoutmousepress.org

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Angela Halgrimson

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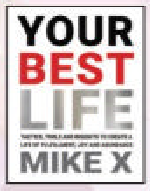
9781643437286 • $19.95 • 24 pp.

Available from Itasca Books, Ingram, Baker & Taylor
Beaver’s Pond Press • angelahalgrimson.com

SELF-HELP



Your Best Life

Tactics, Tools, and Insights to Create a Life of Fulfillment, Joy and Abundance

Mike X

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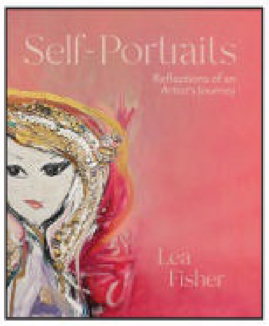
ART & PHOTOGRAPHY



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Reflections of an Artist's Journey
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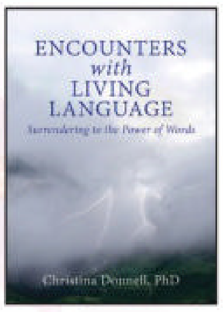
dayiiiprod.com or Leafisherart.com

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT



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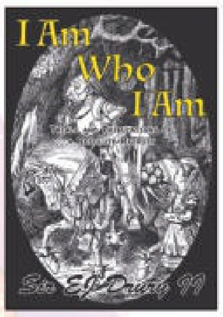

I Am Who I Am
Trials and Tribulations of a Resolute Recruit
Sir EJ Drury II
Divine saga hell-bent on freeing no man of war from a great gray man-o'-war.
9780979702365 • $29.95 • 314 pp.
Available from Ingram Wholesale
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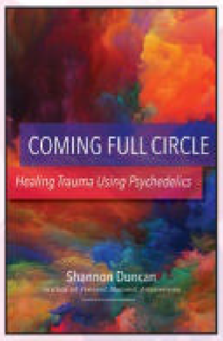

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Shannon Duncan
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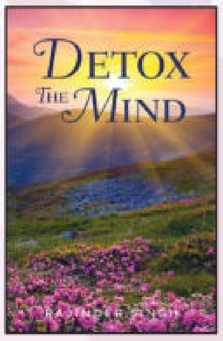
Present Moment Press • presentmomentpress.com



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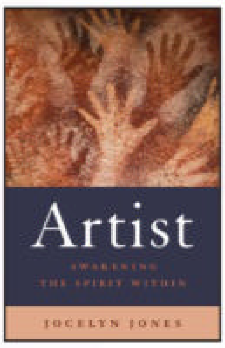
Rajinder Singh
Discover happiness and peace by reducing your stress through easy, practical tips, meditation, and exercises.
9780918224316 • $20.00 • 224 pp.
Available from Baker & Taylor, Amazon
Radiance Publishers • radiancepublishers.com

MEMOIR



Artist
Awakening the Spirit Within
Jocelyn Jones
Both memoir, and roadmap to becoming not only a great actor, but brilliant human being.
[Memoir, Inspirational, Spiritual]
9781544528298 $19.52 (Paperback); $2.99 (eBook) • 267 pp.
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Goodspeed Press • JocelynJonesStudio.com

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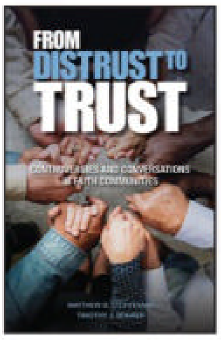

From Distrust to Trust
Controversies and Conversations in Faith Communities
Matthew B. Sturtevant and Timothy J. Bonner
Sturtevant and Bonner identify model practices for churches engaging in controversial decisions.
9780817018429 • $22.99 • 184 pp.
Available from Anchor Distributors, Baker & Taylor,
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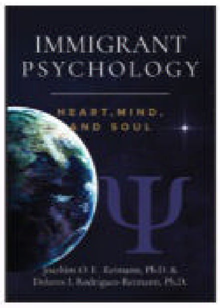

Immigrant Psychology
Heart, Mind, and Soul
Joachim O. F. Reimann Ph.D. and
Dolores I. Rodríguez-Reimann, Ph.D.
We make immigrant-specific psychological information widely available to enhance mental health service access and treatment. [Psychology]
978955658072 • $14.99 • 196 pp.
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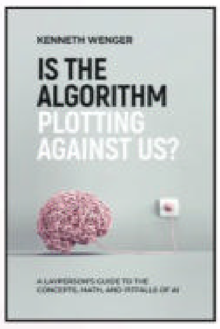
Romo Books • immigrantscreening.com/romo-books



Is the Algorithm Plotting Against Us?
A Layperson's Guide to the Concepts, Math, and Pitfalls of AI
Kenneth Wenger
Is artificial intelligence taking over the world? Read this AI survival guide and decide.
[Science, Technology, and Society]
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9781959632009, $27.99 (hardcover) • 273 pp.
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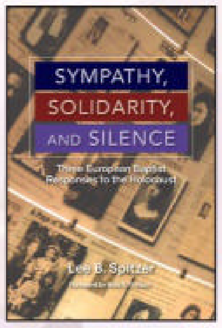
(pbs@pathwaybook.com), Ingram, Baker & Taylor
Working Fires Foundation • workingfires.org



Sympathy, Solidarity, and Silence
Three European Baptist Responses to the Holocaust
Lee B. Spitzer
Dr. Spitzer retells how Baptists in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany responded to Nazism and the ensuing Holocaust.
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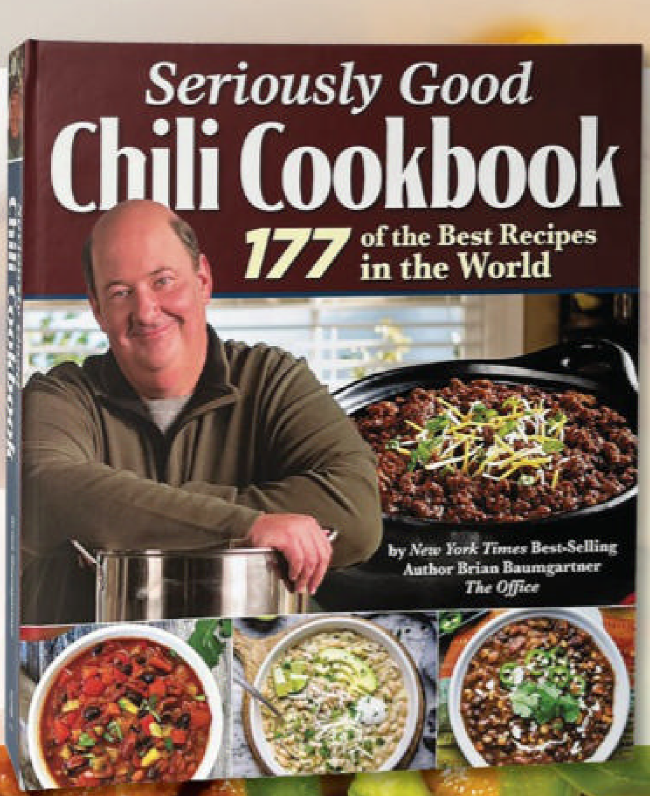
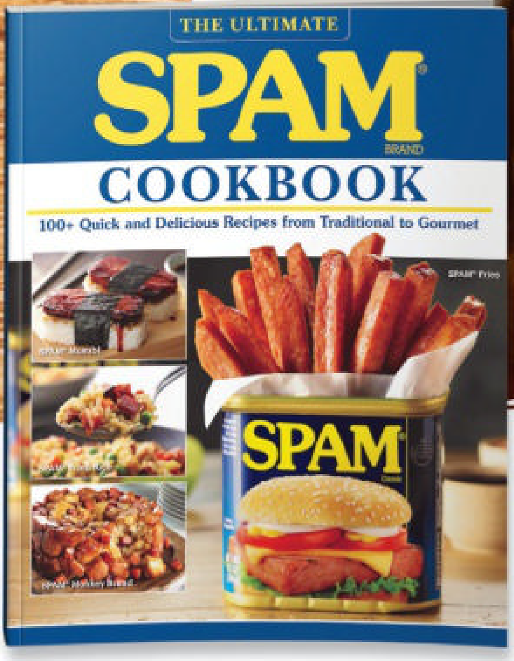
Leah Johnson

The Stonewall Honor–winning YA author pivots to middle grade for her series launch, *Ellie Engle Saves Herself*. See our review on p. 81.

Must-Have Cookbooks for All Occasions


Seriously Good
Chili Cookbook
177 of the Best Recipes in the World
by New York Times Best-Selling Author Brian Baumgartner
The Office

9781497102019 **$24.99**
Written by NY Times best-selling author Brian Baumgartner, from the hit show *The Office*, this book is not your average cookbook. It includes chili recipes from Brian himself but also winners from the world championship chili cook-off.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COOKBOOK
100+ Quick and Delicious Recipes from Traditional to Gourmet

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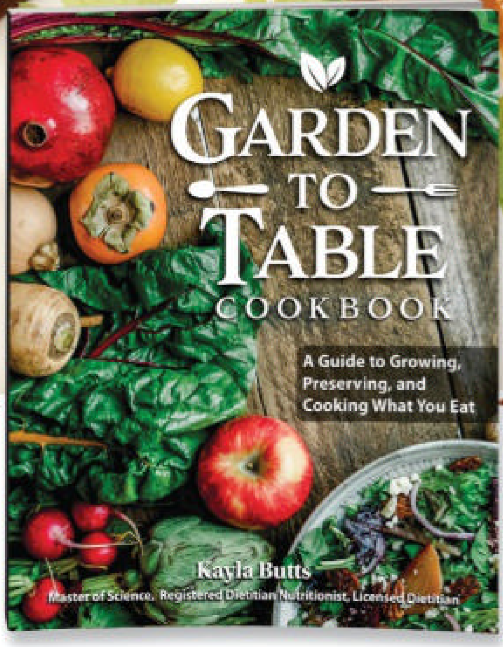
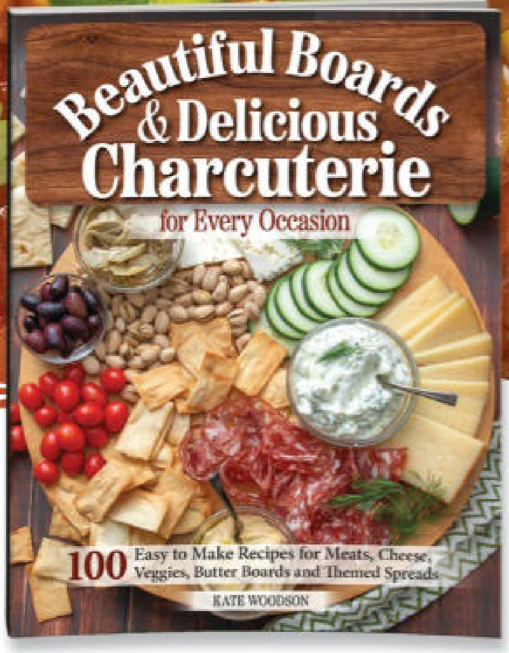
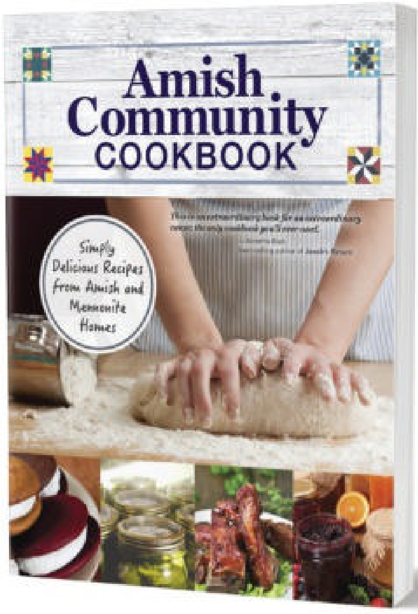
The first and only official SPAM® cookbook!


GARDEN TO TABLE
COOKBOOK
A Guide to Growing, Preserving, and Cooking What You Eat
Kayla Butts
Master of Science, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Licensed Dietitian

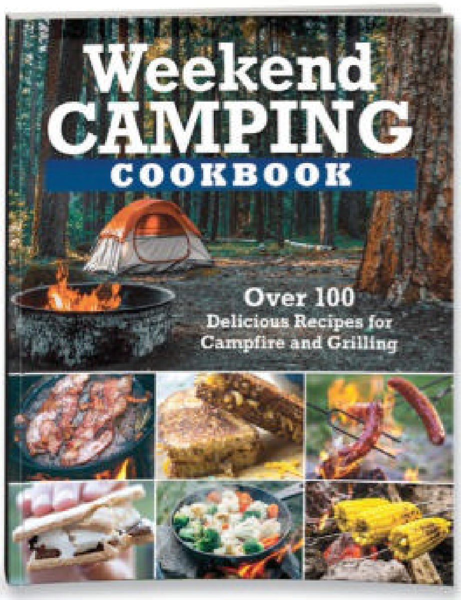
9781497102927 **$19.99**
Gardening, canning, and cooking at home to foster a healthy lifestyle.


Beautiful Boards & Delicious Charcuterie
for Every Occasion
100 Easy to Make Recipes for Meats, Cheese, Veggies, Butter Boards and Themed Spreads
KATE WOODSON

9781497103832 **$14.99**
Features 28 snack, charcuterie, and butter board themes and recipes, including fruit.


Amish Community
COOKBOOK
Simply Delicious Recipes from Amish and Mennonite Homes

9781497100008 **$14.99**
Learn to make 294 favorite dishes the Amish way.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COOKBOOK
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Delicious Recipes for Campfire and Grilling

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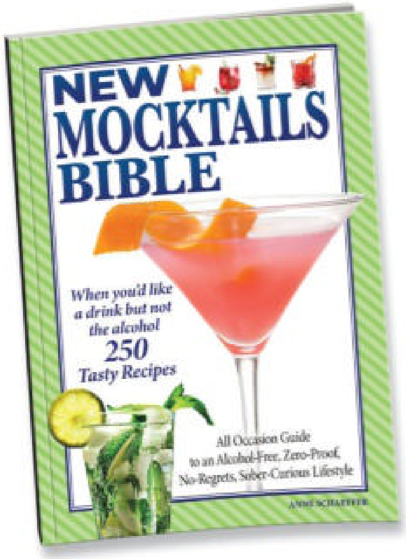
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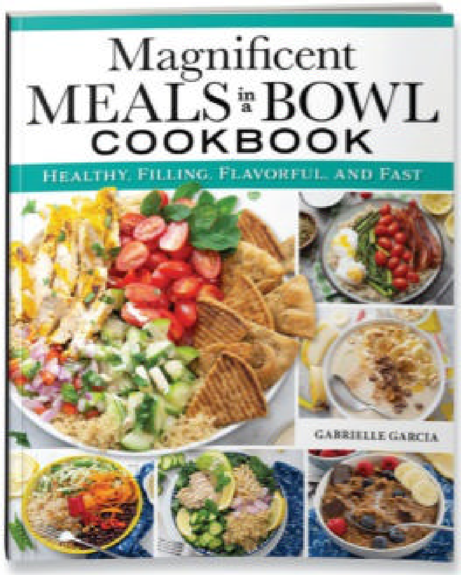
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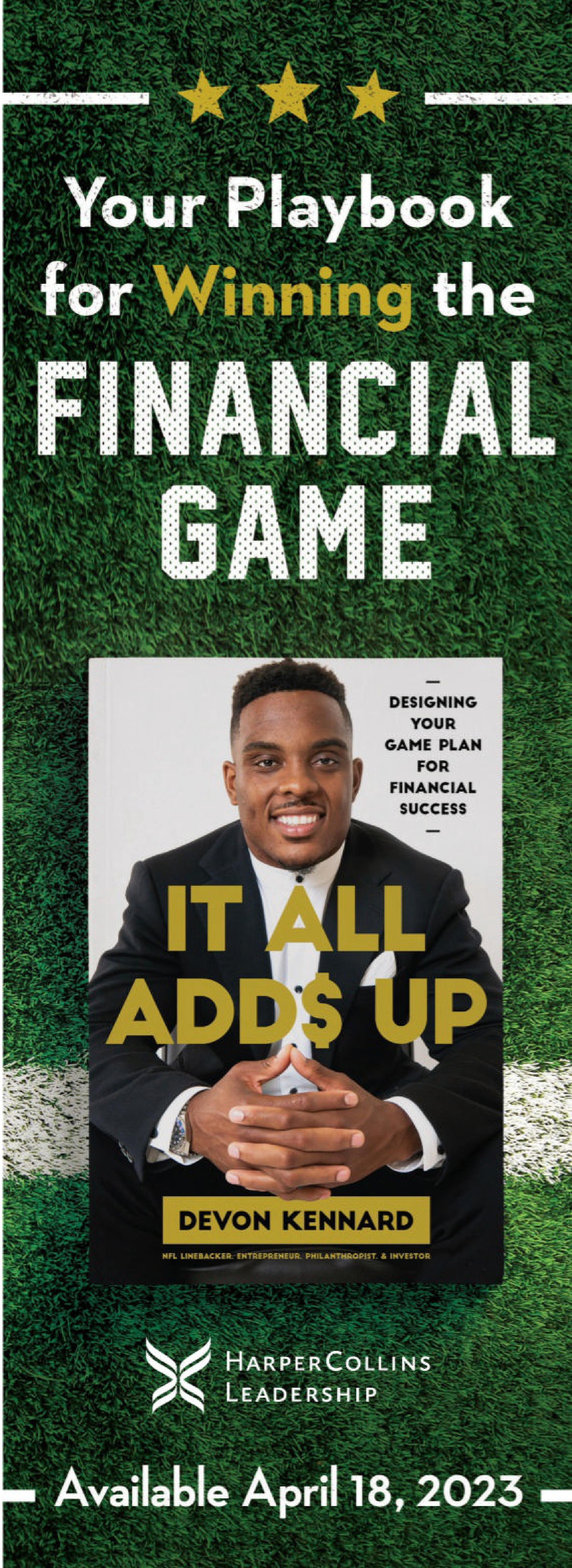
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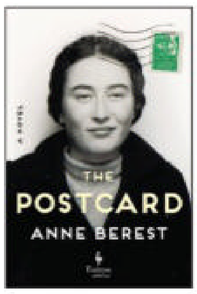

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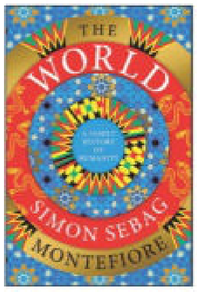

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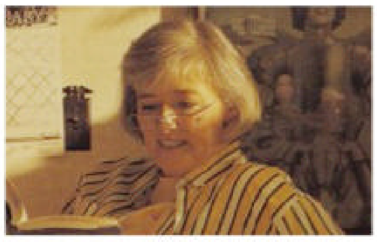
The Week in **Publishing**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Pat Schroeder, who served as a Colorado congresswoman for 24 years before heading the Association of American Publishers for 12 years, died on March 13. She was 82.

Protect the Creative Economy Coalition is a new advocacy group designed to combat a growing number of new library e-book bills surfacing in state legislatures in the opening weeks of 2023. Among its members are the AAP, ABA, and Authors Guild.

PROTECT THE
Creative Economy
COALITION

Call for Information

Feature: *Health Books*
Deadline: Apr. 3 **Issue:** May 22
This feature will look at books relevant to all aspects of physical and mental health. Prescriptive and narrative books are welcome. Pub dates: end of May through November. New titles only, please; no reprints. Submission deadline is April 3. Visit publishersweekly.com/healthmay23 to submit your titles.

Bookstore sales jumped 15.9% in January over January 2022, to $997 million, according to preliminary estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Sales in the month were the highest since 2019, when January sales were $1 billion.

Greenlight Bookstore's outlet at 632 Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn will permanently close on May 14. Greenlight's flagship location in Fort Greene, as well as the company's stationery store Yours Truly Brooklyn, will remain open.

GREENLIGHT BOOKSTORE

Online & On-Air

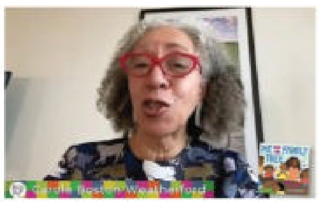
Velocity of Content

A great defender of free speech is retiring. Senior writer Andrew Albanese discusses the career and impact of Christopher Finan.
publishersweekly.com/finan

More to Come

The podcast's Stargazing segment returns, with reviews editor Meg Lemke and contributing editor Calvin Reid discussing Julia Wertz's *Impossible People* and Riad Sattouf's Esther's Notebooks series.
publishersweekly.com/stargazing23

Children's Bookshelf



The Center for Children's Literature at Bank Street College held a virtual event for the inaugural Margaret Wise Brown Board Book Award on March 9.
publishersweekly.com/wise-brown

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War Takes Toll on Ukrainian Publishers

Despite disruptions, most remain resilient a year after the Russian invasion

It’s now been more than a year since Russia began its invasion of Ukraine, killing hundreds of thousands, sending millions into exile, and throwing the country’s publishing industry into disarray. The number of titles published in Ukraine was cut almost in half last year, dropping from 17,000 in 2021 to just under 9,000, according to the Ukrainian Book Institute (UBI), which collects data on the industry.

EUROPE WINNER
BOLOGNA PRIZE FOR THE BEST CHILDREN'S PUBLISHERS OF THE YEAR 2023
THE OLD LION PUBLISHING HOUSE UKRAINE

Old Lion Publishing House from Lviv was named European children’s publisher of the year at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair earlier this month.

The war has been especially difficult on the printing sector, which is centered in Kharkiv and had a significant amount of infrastructure destroyed. As a result, the total number of books printed in Ukraine fell from 25.7 million in 2021 to 9.2 million in 2022. Ukrainian printers and publishers are also dealing with the same supply chain issues that their counterparts around the world face, with paper in particular being in short supply. “Ukraine would import 60,000 tons of paper in a typical year, however in 2022, the industry only received 20,000 tons,” said Yulia Orlova, CEO of Vivat Publishing in Kharkiv, the second-largest publisher in the country.

Despite the many disruptions, Ukrainian publishers have been able to continue their work. Vivat, for example, shut down when the war started, as many of its staff of 100 were forced to relocate and work remotely. After shipping 20 truckloads of books to western Ukraine, it began fulfilling book orders in April. In June, it resumed publishing new titles, releasing 350 last year—a small drop from the nearly 400 published in 2021. In addition, Vivat opened a new bookstore in Kyiv in October.

Since the start of the war, many companies moved some of their staff overseas, and several figures from the industry have been promoting the cause of Ukrainian publishing abroad. Among those most active on the international scene has been Yulia Kozlovets, director of the Book Arsenal, the largest literary festival in Ukraine, which is typically held in Kyiv in spring. Kozlovets attended the Bologna Children’s Book Fair earlier this month. During a reception, she thanked the international community for its support and said she hopes that the publishing world will not “lose interest” in Ukraine as the war drags on. She also hopes that Ukraine will be able to hold the Book Arsenal later this year, provided the fighting isn’t too heavy or too close to Kyiv.

Throughout 2022, foreign publishers were eager to show their support for Ukraine, while also providing information about Ukraine to their readers, by buying rights to Ukrainian books. According to UBI, the number of rights sales for Ukrainian books nearly doubled last year, from 120 in 2021 to 230.

The Old Lion Publishing House, a children’s press in Lviv, signed 67 deals—more than any other Ukrainian publisher—including 11 for its bestselling *How the War Changed Rondo* by Romana Romanyshyn, illustrated by Andriy Lesiv. Old Lion was also honored as Best Children’s Book Publisher of the Year for Europe at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair. Ranok, Ukraine’s largest publishing house, made 52 foreign rights sales, followed by Vivat with 40. The author with the most interest abroad was Serhiy Zhadan, a well-regarded poet and performer, whose books generated 140 deals.

In the two years prior to the war, the Translate Ukraine program, run by UBI, offered €300,000 to support the translation of Ukrainian works, resulting in 113 books published in 24 countries. The program was halted when the war started, but UBI announced that it will restart soon, with the aim of supporting the translation of 50 more books.

For the foreseeable future, the focus of most Ukrainian publishers is finding ways to cope with fundamental problems, like how to keep the lights and heat on following Russian air strikes. At Old Lion, employees rely on generators. The Vivat office in Kharkiv has turned into what has become known as a “point of invincibility,” with a generator and a Starlink connection to provide employees with light, heat, and internet.

Ultimately, only an end to the war will offer Ukraine’s publishing industry a return to anything like normalcy. “We must never forget that there’s a war going on,” Kozlovets said. “And we’re fighting for our lives.” **—Ed Nawotka**

Culture Wars Energize Feminist Bookstores

As book banning efforts intensify—along with assaults on women's bodily autonomy and on the AP African American studies curriculum—old-school feminist bookstores and new intersectional feminist stores alike are drawing customers seeking safe spaces for buying books and gathering information.

Sarah Hollenbeck, co-owner of Women & Children First in Chicago, echoed other feminist booksellers *PW* spoke with when she said that the current culture wars have rejuvenated her 44-year-old store. "In recent years, we've only stood stronger in our mission and encouraged our community to invest in the ongoing work," Hollenbeck said. "Our most recent tote bag reads 'Support Your Local Feminist Bookstore' in big, bold, all-caps letters. That pretty much captures the tone of our current marketing strategy."

WCF also has been buoyed by spikes in new customers and sales due to external factors. Most notably, in June 2022, Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker visited WCF to mark his repeal of a state law requiring minors to obtain parental consent before having an abortion, just before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down *Roe* v. *Wade*. "We continue to have quite a bit of interest in certain titles, like the new edition of *The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service* and *Ejaculate Responsibly: A Whole New Way to Think About Abortion*," Hollenbeck said.

WCF has also upped its scheduling of collaborative programming benefiting feminist organizations, including two Bake Sale for Abortion fundraisers for the Chicago Abortion Fund.

Sales at 49-year-old Charis Books & More in Decatur, Ga. also "have gone up, and up, and up" in the past year, said co-owner Sara Luce Look, who ascribes this success to being "rooted in community that holds us accountable." Charis has always had robust programming in collaboration with like-minded organizations, such as one Atlanta group focused on reproductive justice and another on domestic violence. "The kinds of books we carry and the programing we do are intertwined," Charis added, noting that the store is going to be a distribution point for Plan B contraception pills.

The Weekly Scorecard

Print Sales Rose 4.2% in Early March

With young adult fiction the only major category posting a decline, unit sales of print books increased 4.2% in the week ended Mar. 11, 2023, over the comparable week in 2022, at outlets that report to Circana BookScan. Adult fiction had the biggest increase, with sales up 9.8%. *Never Never* by Colleen Hoover and Tarryn Fisher stayed in the top spot, selling more than 38,000 copies. In all, Hoover titles had six of the top 10 spots on the adult fiction list, selling a total of about 180,000 copies. *Worthy Opponents* by Danielle Steel cracked the adult fiction top 10, landing in ninth place, selling more than 19,000 copies. The adult nonfiction category posted a rare gain in the most recent week, as sales increased 0.9% over the week ended Mar. 12, 2022. *The Courage to Be Free* by Ron DeSantis remained #1 in the category, with sales of more than 24,000 copies. The bestselling new book was *The Greatness Mindset* by Lewis Howes, which sold more than 15,000 copies—good enough for fourth place on the list. Juvenilefiction sales increased 4.6% over 2022. Dr. Seuss titles—led by *Green Eggs and Ham*, which sold more than 28,000 copies—again drove sales. A new release, *Curse of the Shadow Dragon* by Tracey West, was #9 on the category list, selling more than 14,000 copies. The juvenile nonfiction category had one of its better weeks, with sales up 1.9%. *Hogwarts Legacy* by Paul Davies was the category's top title, selling more than 17,000 copies. The bestselling new book in YA fiction was *Teen Titans: Robin* by Kami Garcia, which sold more than 8,000 copies.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 12, 2022	MAR. 11, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	13,952	14,532	4.2%	-1.1%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 12, 2022	MAR. 11, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	5,189	5,236	0.9%	-3.6%
Adult Fiction	3,149	3,460	9.8%	5.7%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,244	1,267	1.9%	-6.8%
Juvenile Fiction	3,594	3,760	4.6%	-3.7%
Young Adult Fiction	536	535	-0.1%	1.7%
Young Adult Nonfiction	79	83	5.1%	-9.5%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 12, 2022	MAR. 11, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	4,062	4,079	0.4%	-3.8%
Trade Paperback	7,914	8,309	5.0%	0.1%
Mass Market Paperback	597	556	-6.9%	-18.1%
Board Books	970	1,116	15.0%	5.3%

Circana.

SOURCE: CIRCANA BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. CIRCANA'S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

Most of the indies identifying as feminist stores that have opened in recent years also embrace LGBTQ books and Black literature. One such store, Socialight Society in Lansing, Mich., was founded in 2021 as a pop-up specializing in books by Black women; it moved into a bricks-and-mortar space inside the Lansing Mall a year ago. Owner Nyshell Lawrence said she was inspired to open Socialight Society after visiting a large bookstore in Lansing that had a "pretty disappointing" section of books by BIPOC authors.

© SARAHHOLLENBECK

From l.: Women & Children First co-owner Lynn Mooney greets Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker, state Rep. Kelly Cassidy, and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton at the Chicago store last June.

"Things are going well" with in-store and online sales, plus sales to local schools, Lawrence said, noting that Socialight stocks 300 titles. Conversations with customers often concern banned books, since "people want to get their hands on them," she noted.

This past summer, sales at Socialight rose when customers were given the opportunity to donate books to be handed out to protesters for women's rights rallying outside the Michigan state capitol building. "*Just Get on the Pill: The Uneven Burden of Reproductive Politics* was probably the most popular book handed out to the protesters," Lawrence said.

All She Wrote Books, founded in Somerville, Mass., by Christina Pascucci Ciampa in 2019 as a pop-up, moved into a bricks-and-mortar location in July 2020. Ciampa was prompted to open All She Wrote, she explained, due to the "lack of curation" of certain feminist and LGBTQ titles in other bookstores, shelved in such a way that they were "overshadowed by some of publishing's biggest names."

Ciampa promotes books by women and LGBTQ writers, as well as those by disabled writers and those portraying disabled characters in positive ways. "When I was younger," she explained, "I did not see any books with someone in a wheelchair featured in it and being this bold, amazing character, or anybody talking about autism, whether it was fiction or nonfiction. I knew these types of books were out there."

All She Wrote is "more than just a feminist/queer independent bookstore," Ciampa said. "When I think of the words *intersectional*, *feminist*, and *queer*, which are in our mission statement, I think of them as guiding lights for those who are not only actively seeking queer/feminist spaces out like ours but for those who want more spaces like ours in the world."

Inspired by the 1970s feminist publishing movement, Jamie Harker started Violet Valley in 2018 in Water Valley, Miss., a town of 4,000 residents 17 miles from Oxford. Referring to a 2017 state law "that indemnified license to discriminate against LGBTQ people," Harker said she wanted to create "a safe space, especially for queer youth," adding, "I know books and I know LGBTQ culture." So launching an "explicitly queer and feminist bookstore" made sense.

Violet Valley customers are a mix of locals and travelers from Oxford, Memphis, Jackson, and beyond, Harker said. The store had repeated upticks in sales this past year "whenever something happens, either nationally or locally."

She recalled that when a controversy erupted over critical race theory, a supporter in San Francisco launched a fund through Violet Valley benefiting Mississippi queer youth who want to read banned books but cannot afford to buy them. "This is one of those moments when we have to use our ingenuity to get around homophobic culture," Harker said.

Another intersectional feminist indie, Burdock Book Collective in Birmingham, Ala., was founded in 2018 by Katie Willis and Meagan Lyle. After visiting Charis, the two were inspired to start their own feminist bookstore. BBC has collaborated on several events with Violet Valley and Charis, including a recent hybrid event featuring Alex Ketchum, the author of *Ingredients for Revolution: A History of American Feminist Restaurants, Cafes, and Coffeehouses*.

"We wanted to have a community organizing space for people to connect, learn and grow," Willis and Lyle said of their pop-up. "We wanted our inventory to represent voices and authors from different backgrounds and life experiences, especially writers who have been marginalized in more mainstream bookstores. We saw many indies in our city that did not uplift the voices of women, people of color, LGBTQ + folks, disabled people, and people from poor communities."

Though BBC did not see the increase in sales last summer reported by other feminist indies *PW* spoke with, Lyle and Willis said the store's sales are slowly climbing. And making money is not a priority, they added—they opened the store because they love books and "think it is important to create space for people to come together around literature."

—Claire Kirch

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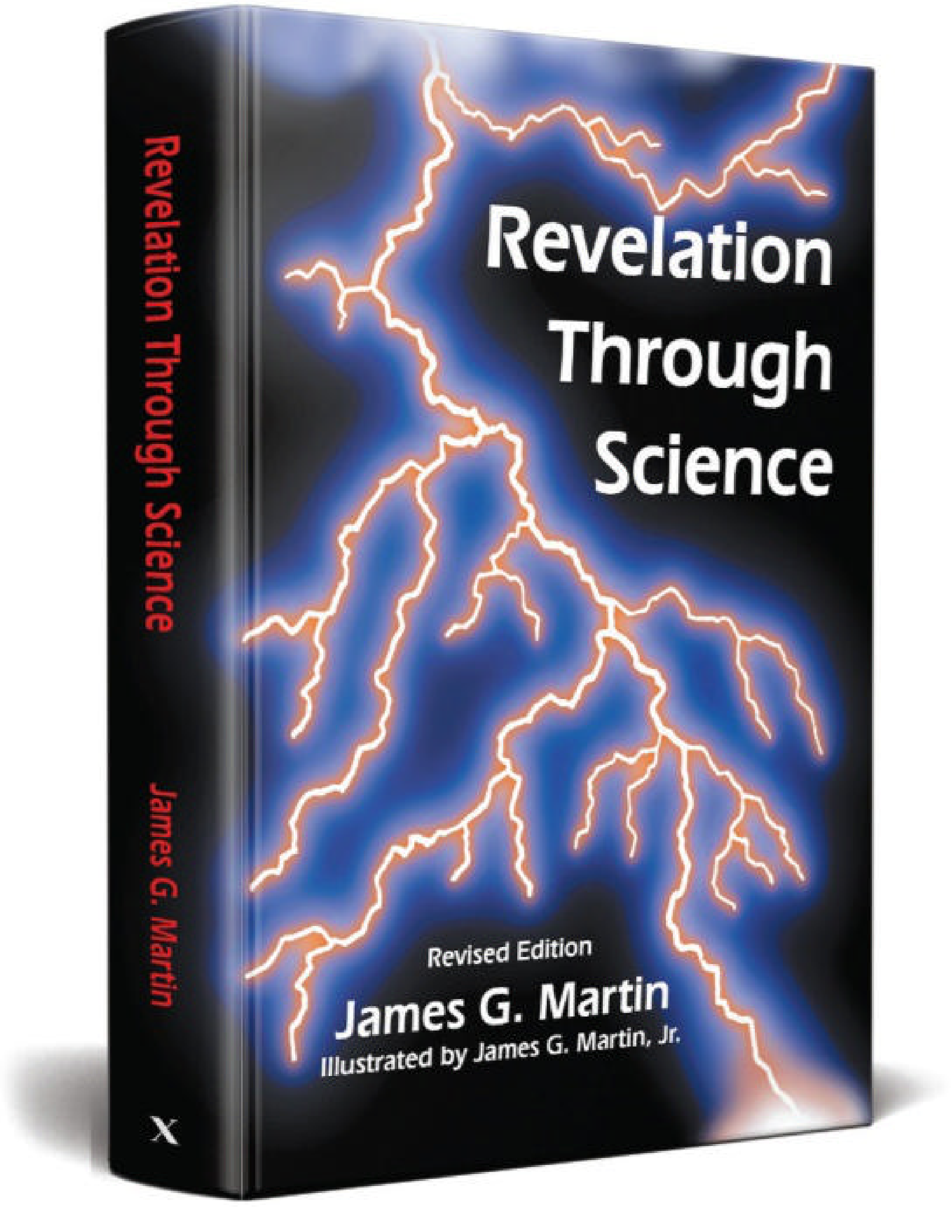
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Making Steinbeck's Home a Retreat

John Steinbeck's home in Long Island's Sag Harbor may soon secure its place in literary history, thanks to an impassioned coalition of readers, writers, and booksellers. The Sag Harbor Partnership; the town of Southampton, N.Y.; and the University of Texas at Austin have joined forces to purchase Steinbeck's beloved summer cottage, which is currently for sale for the first time in 60 years. The goal: to preserve the property to use as a writers retreat, hosted by UT Austin's Michener Center for Writers.

The coalition is nearing its monetary goal, and the Sag Harbor Partnership is now in the midst of its final fundraising push. As of this writing, through a combination of public and private funds, the Sag Harbor Partnership's bid has been accepted by the seller, and now the organization needs to raise $90,000 by the closing date of March 30 to complete its purchase of the $13.5 million property.

Steinbeck bought the cottage, located on secluded Bluff Point Lane, in 1955 and spent summers there until his death in 1968. He filled his days there with fishing and writing. In his 1962 book *Travels with Charley*, he referred to the home as "my little fishing place," and he completed his final novel—*The Winter of Our Discontent*, set in a fictional coastal town modeled on Sag Harbor—there. The 1.8-acre waterfront property includes the one-story wood-shingled cottage, a pier, and a small gazebo that Steinbeck used as a writing studio.

Steinbeck used the gazebo behind his Sag Harbor home as a writing studio.

© KATHRYN SZOKA

When the property went up for sale in 2021, local bookseller Kathryn Szoka sprung into action. Szoka, who is the co-owner of Canio's Bookstore in Sag Harbor, believed the community had on its hands a "national treasure" worth preserving. "I called everyone I knew who could guide and advise me," she said, and began strategizing with community leaders, local politicians, and Steinbeck scholars.

Soon she launched an online petition to convert the property into a writers retreat with limited visitation and community access. Within weeks, the petition garnered more than 30,000 signatures. Szoka then teamed with writer John Avlon and artist April Gornik, who live in Sag Harbor, to form the Steinbeck House Committee, which quickly drew Colson Whitehead, another local resident, as honorary chair. Before long, the nonprofit Sag Harbor Partnership signed on to support the committee's fundraising efforts.

Next, UT Austin, which currently houses an extensive collection of Steinbeck's archives, was brought on board to facilitate the planned writers retreat. The Michener Center for Writers, the university's MFA program, proved the ideal steward for the retreat. Michener Center director Bret Anthony Johnston said that when he was first approached by the committee, he revisited Steinbeck's oeuvre and several biographies, which impressed upon him "how important community was to Steinbeck, including both Sag Harbor and the community he made with the writers he admired."

Johnston believes that a writers retreat in Steinbeck's name will carry on the author's own legacy of supporting early-career writers. When Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940, he gave his $1,000 in prize money to an aspiring writer to help him finish his first novel. "That level of support—that commitment to writers and the work they're making—is the bar he's set for us," Johnston said, "and it's the model that we should use to honor his legacy as a writer."

While it's still too early to describe the specifics of the retreat, Johnston envisions the residencies will be available for both early-career writers and established authors. "When we assemble a jury to select residents, we would—again, following Steinbeck's example—prioritize inclusivity and diversity, artistic excellence and literary promise, and of course community engagement," he said. "We want Sag Harbor to embrace the writers, and we want the writers to spend time in the community that was so important to Steinbeck."

The campaign has gained traction in the past two years, and in February, Southampton voted to contribute $11.2 million from its Community Preservation Fund to the project. This is not the first time residents have mobilized to commemorate Steinbeck: in 2019, Sag Harbor opened the 1.25-acre John Steinbeck Waterfront Park.

"We believe that this is a win-win for everybody," said Diana Howard, a member of the Sag Harbor Partnership. "We would preserve this piece of literary and cultural history, the property would be open by appointment to visitors, and Steinbeck's home would be used to foster a new generation of authors."

—Sophia Stewart

THE SEQUEL TO THE M
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THE HOUSE OF FORT NE
JESS

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DEALS

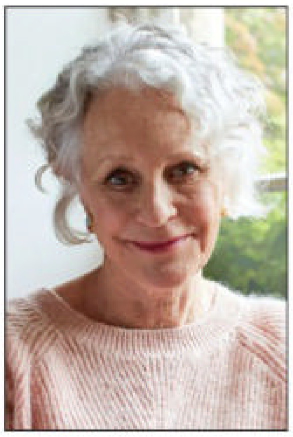
DEAL OF THE WEEK

Randall Goes 'Country' at S&S

For Simon & Schuster's Black Privilege Publishing imprint, **Nicholas Ciani** took world rights to **Alice Randall**'s *My Black Country*. Randall (*Black Bottom Saints*), a bestselling author and songwriter, was represented by Dupree Miller's **Alexandria Kominsky**. S&S said the book is a "hybrid work of research and personal history" that exhumes "the Black roots of country music." Randall structures the narrative "through her travels across the nation to trace the story of America's 'First Family of Black Country' " and reckon with her own complex past.

Randall

Gregory Gets 'National' at HarperVia


Gregory

HarperVia took world rights to **Philippa Gregory**'s *National Women*. The agreement originated out of the bestselling historical fiction author's native U.K., with **Arabelle Pike** at HarperCollins UK imprint William Collins acquiring the book and **Zahra Gibbery** at Vivat Publishing representing Gregory. **Gretchen Schmid** at HarperVia will edit the title in the U.S., and it's set for release here in February 2024. The publisher said *National Women* tells the story of the U.K. "through the stories of women soldiers, jousters, guild widows, nuns... and 'female husbands' who for centuries blazed the trail for women today."

Holt Signs Menger-Anderson

Menger-Anderson

Amy Einhorn at Henry Holt preempted world rights to *The Expert of Subtle Revisions* by **Kirsten Menger-Anderson**. The publisher said the debut novel, sold by **Heather Jackson** at Heather Jackson Literary Agency, is "a taut, genre-bending historical mystery perfect for readers looking for their next dark academia fix" and is "steeped in math and misfortune." Menger-Anderson's 2008 short story collection, *Doctor Olaf van Schuler's Brain*, was a finalist for the Northern California Book Award. *The Expert of Subtle Revisions* is slated for August 2024.

Mako's 'Wave' Hits Ballantine

© SONY PICTURES

Mako

Adam Mako (*A Higher Call*) sold *Tidal Wave* to **Mary Reynics** at Ballantine in a world rights agreement. The publisher said the nonfiction book tells "the dramatic tale of a young American B-24 crew who crashed during a bombing raid against the Ploesti oil fields in Romania during WWII and their journey to escape with the help of Romanian allies." The author did not use an agent in the deal, and *Tidal Wave* is slated for spring or summer 2025.

Little, Brown Swims in Cordalis's 'Water'

Cordalis

Little, Brown's **Tracy Sherrod** took world rights at auction to **Amy Bowers Cordalis**'s *Child of Big Water*. Cordalis, a member of the Yurok Tribe in California, was represented by **Mark Tauber** at the Watermark Agency. The publisher said the book—subtitled *Indigenous Resistance, Resilience and Stewardship, How a Tribe and a Family Fought to Win the World's Biggest River Restoration Project*—tells the story, through the voices of Cordalis's family, of "a century of her tribe's subjugation and the battle they took upon themselves to... rescue their heritage." Members of the tribe have been fighting government agencies for decades over the damming of irrigation waters, and last year Congress ordered that a dam be removed from the Klamath River. *Child of Big Water* is slated for December 2024.

Bloomsbury Nabs Pearson's Debut

© ADRENNE PEARSON

Pearson

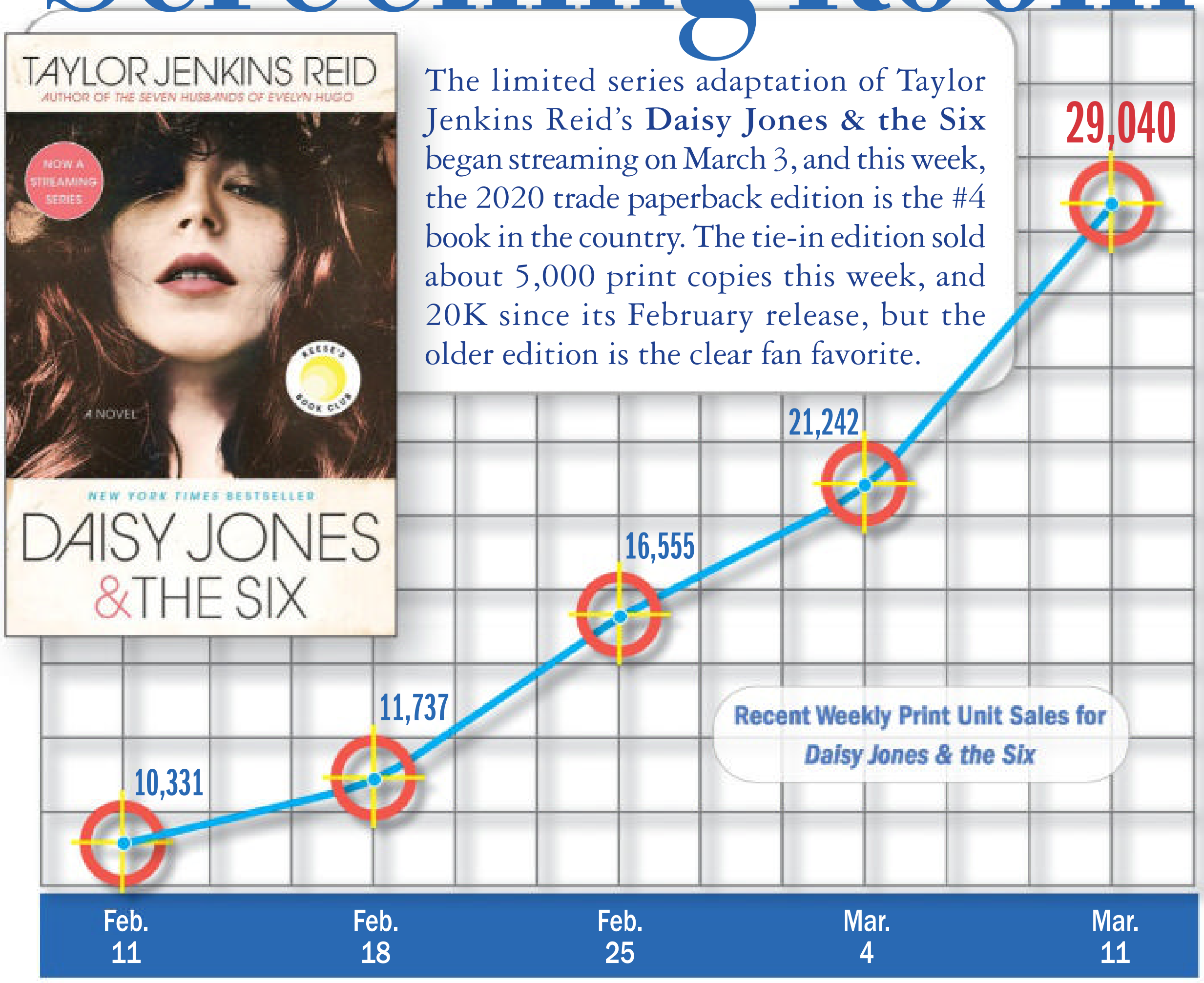
In a North American rights agreement, Bloomsbury's **Daniel Loedel** bought **Joanna Pearson**'s adult debut *Bright and Tender Dark*. The publisher said the literary mystery is "about the death of a charismatic young college student and its long, sensational aftermath in a community possessed by questions of the unknown." Pearson, a psychiatrist and Drue Heinz Literature Prize winner, was represented by **Marya Spence** at Janklow & Nesbit Associates.

Behind the Bestsellers MARCH 5–11, 2023

By Carolyn Juris

Screening Room

The limited series adaptation of Taylor Jenkins Reid's **Daisy Jones & the Six** began streaming on March 3, and this week, the 2020 trade paperback edition is the #4 book in the country. The tie-in edition sold about 5,000 print copies this week, and 20K since its February release, but the older edition is the clear fan favorite.



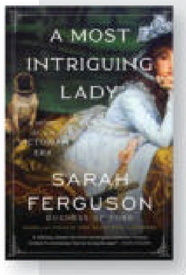
Triple Crown

Hannah Whitten debuted in 2021 with *For the Wolf*, first in a fairy tale–inspired duology that concluded with 2022's *For the Throne*. Each received a starred review from *PW* and landed on our trade paperback list in its first week; the two have sold a combined 140K print units. Her new book, **The Foxglove King**, is her first hardcover release and debuts at #18 on that list. It's a "stunning fantasy," per our starred review, whose "fascinating magic system and ever-present danger keep the pages flying."

THE FOXGLOVE KING
HANNAH WHITTEN

© CALEB WHITTEN

NEW & NOTABLE

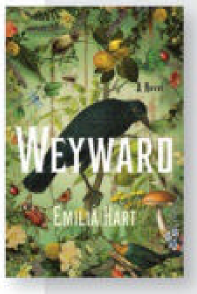


A MOST INTRIGUING LADY

Sarah Ferguson

#13 Hardcover Fiction

"This superior blend of mystery and romance from the Duchess of York introduces Lady Mary Montagu Douglas Scott, the younger daughter of close friends of Queen Victoria, who chafes at being expected to adhere to her era's rigid restrictions on women," per our starred review. Ferguson "plausibly depicts the struggles of a capable woman who empowers herself to achieve her own potential."



WEYWARD

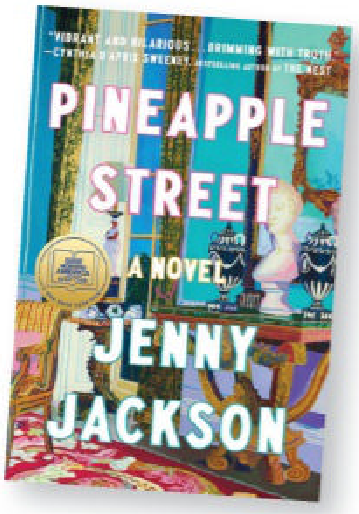
Emilia Hart

#19 Hardcover Fiction

"Hart explores in her triumphant debut sexual desire, violence, and personal autonomy in the lives of three strong-willed English women from the 17th century to the present," according to our starred review, "showing how they confronted a patriarchal society to take control of their lives."

In Clubland

The March *Good Morning America* pick, **Pineapple Street** by Knopf v-p and executive editor Jenny Jackson, debuts at #5 on our hardcover nonfiction list. It's a "clever if tepid debut" that "chronicles the struggles of three women born or married into an old-monied New York City family," our review said. "Despite the dusty feeling, this has its moments," and "Jackson shines in her incisive observations about the ravages of contemporary real estate developments."



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Never Never**	Colleen Hoover	Canary Street	38,557
2	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	37,418
3	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	34,552
4	**Daisy Jones & the Six**	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Ballantine	29,040
5	**Green Eggs and Ham**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	28,341
6	**Heart Bones**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	27,609
7	**The Courage to Be Free**	Ron DeSantis	Broadside	24,304
8	**Atomic Habits**	James Clear	Avery	23,895
9	**One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	23,609
10	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	23,299

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ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Adult Bestsellers | MAR. 5–11, 2023

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	2	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	9780385547345	23,299
2	–	**Worthy Opponents**	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821805	19,261
3	1	**Storm Watch**	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	16,421
4	4	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	11,011
5	–	**Pineapple Street**	Jenny Jackson	Viking/Dorman	9780593490693	10,399
6	–	**Star Wars Jedi: Battle Scars**	Sam Maggs	Random House Worlds	9780593598603	9,647
7	3	**A Day of Fallen Night**	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	9781635577921	8,406
8	–	**The London Séance Society**	Sarah Penner	Park Row	9780778387114	8,202
9	5	**Someone Else's Shoes**	Jojo Moyes	Viking/Dorman	9781984879295	7,610
10	6	**Demon Copperhead**	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	7,549
11	8	**I Have Some Questions for You**	Rebecca Makkai	Viking	9780593490143	6,475
12	7	**The Boys from Biloxi**	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385548922	5,857
13	–	**A Most Intriguing Lady**	Sarah Ferguson	Avon	9780063216822	5,610
14	–	**The Sister Effect**	Susan Mallery	HQN	9781335448644	5,534
15	13	**Remarkably Bright Creatures**	Shelby Van Pelt	Ecco	9780063204157	5,173
16	11	**Mad Honey**	Picoult/Boylan	Ballantine	9781984818386	5,077
17	9	**Fairy Tale**	Stephen King	Scribner	9781668002179	4,983
18	–	**The Foxglove King**	Hannah Whitten	Orbit	9780316434997	4,824
19	–	**Weyward**	Emilia Hart	St. Martin's	9781250280800	4,581
20	14	**The House in the Pines**	Ana Reyes	Dutton	9780593186718	3,959

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**The Courage to Be Free**	Ron DeSantis	Broadside	9780063276000	24,304
2	2	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	21,767
3	–	**The Greatness Mindset**	Lewis Howes	Hay House	9781401971908	15,595
4	5	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	11,366
5	–	**Good Power**	Ginni Rometty	Harvard Business Review	9781647823221	9,872
6	7	**I'm Glad My Mom Died**	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	9,759
7	6	**8 Rules of Love**	Jay Shetty	Simon & Schuster	9781982183066	9,188
8	3	**Young Forever**	Mark Hyman	Little, Brown Spark	9780316453189	9,105
9	14	**It's OK to Be Angry About Capitalism**	Bernie Sanders	Crown	9780593238714	7,041
10	13	**Walk the Blue Line**	Patterson/Eversmann	Little, Brown	9780316406604	6,883
11	11	**The Light We Carry**	Michelle Obama	Crown	9780593237465	6,410
12	18	**The Lives We Actually Have**	Bowler/Richie	Convergent	9780593193709	6,128
13	15	**Win Every Argument**	Mehdi Hasan	Holt	9781250853479	6,057
14	–	**Stolen Youth**	Mandel/Markowicz	DW	9781956007084	5,639
15	–	**Culture Rules**	Mark Miller	BenBella/Holt	9781637742877	5,594
16	8	**All My Knotted-Up Life**	Beth Moore	Tyndale	9781496472670	5,301
17	–	**The Story of Disney**	Baxter/Steele	Disney Editions	9781368061940	5,127
18	4	**Drama Free**	Nedra Glover Tawwab	TarcherPerigee	9780593539279	4,930
19	9	**Wake Up with Purpose!**	Jean Dolores Schmidt	Harper Select	9781400333516	4,710
20	12	**How Far Do You Want to Go?**	John Catsimatidis	BenBella/Holt	9781637743430	4,576

LW: rank last week

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Rich Dad Poor Dad	Robert T. Kiyosaki	Plata	9781612681139	4,812
2	2	Death of the Black Widow	Patterson/Barker	Grand Central	9781538753088	4,738
3	4	Getting Even	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420155549	4,430
4	7	Then You Came Along	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778386131	3,777
5	6	Tom Clancy: Zero Hour	Don Bentley	Berkley	9780593422748	3,716
6	9	Mercy	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719718	3,712
7	13	One Night	Debbie Macomber	Avon	9780061081859	3,389
8	14	Forever Texas	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786047758	3,286
9	3	Alaskan Avalanche Escape	Darlene L. Turner	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587565	3,199
10	17	A Bright New Day	Debbie Macomber	Ballantine	9780593359884	3,161
11	5	Beautiful	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821669	3,059
12	10	The Widow's Hidden Past	Rebecca Kertz	Love Inspired	9781335585554	2,974
13	29	A Place to Call Home	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781335426017	2,936
14	12	Falling for the Amish Bad Boy	Emma Miller	Love Inspired	9781335585547	2,908
15	26	Texas Proud	Diana Palmer	Harlequin	9781335498403	2,884
16	8	K-9 Detectives	Rachel Lee	Harlequin Intrigue	9781335582461	2,847
17	19	Dark Is the Night	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786048519	2,804
18	11	Detecting Secrets	Sami A. Abrams	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587589	2,653
19	35	Here's to Us	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250875051	2,591
20	15	Guarding His Child	Karen Kirst	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587572	2,584

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	38,557
2	2	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	37,418
3	3	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	27,609
4	4	Things We Hide from the Light	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	14,658
5	5	The Paris Apartment	Lucy Foley	Morrow	9780063003064	13,859
6	6	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	10,468
7	–	Beyond Basketball	Mike Krzyzewski	Grand Central	9781538741603	10,072
8	7	Twisted Love	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	9,944
9	8	The Housemaid	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	9,589
10	21	Sparring Partners	John Grisham	Vintage	9780593469491	7,300
11	10	3 Days to Live	James Patterson	Grand Central	9781538752746	7,173
12	12	The Maid	Nita Prose	Ballantine	9780593356173	7,149
13	–	One Italian Summer	Rebecca Serle	Atria	9781982166809	6,917
14	14	Secretly Yours	Tessa Bailey	Avon	9780063238985	6,639
15	13	Twisted Games	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	6,597
16	11	Dream Town	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719756	6,397
17	17	A Court of Silver Flames	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	6,101
18	16	Maybe Now	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668013342	6,031
19	–	Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation, Vol. 1	Xiu/Qiu	Seven Seas	9781638585237	5,944
20	15	The Hotel Nantucket	Elin Hilderbrand	Back Bay	9780316258982	5,874

LW: rank last week

Children's Bestsellers | MAR. 5–11, 2023

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Curse of the Shadow Dragon** (Dragon Masters #23)	Tracey West	Scholastic	9781338776942	14,529
2	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	11,386
3	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	10,999
4	**The Island**	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593481493	8,191
5	**Teen Titans: Robin**	Kami Garcia	DC Comics	9781779512246	8,019
6	**The Adventures of Captain Underpants** (anniv. edition)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338865394	7,546
7	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	7,401
8	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	6,853
9	**Kill Joy**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593426210	6,148
10	**As Good as Dead**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	5,766
11	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #2)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792706	4,401
12	**Karen's Birthday** (Baby-Sitters Little Sister Graphic Novel #6)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338762587	4,157
13	**On Purpose** (Cat Kid Comic Club #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801941	3,934
14	**One of Us Is Lying**	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9781524714758	3,715
15	**Squished**	Megan Wagner Lloyd	Graphix	9781338568936	3,676
16	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	3,561
17	**Rule of Wolves**	Leigh Bardugo	Square Fish	9781250820617	3,463
18	**Investigators: Agents of S.U.I.T.**	John Patrick Green	First Second	9781250852564	3,406
19	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	3,382
20	**The Mary Shelley Club**	Goldy Moldavsky	Square Fish	9781250821232	3,376
21	**Iceberg**	Jennifer A. Nielsen	Scholastic Press	9781338795028	3,325
22	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	3,301
23	**Five Survive**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593374160	3,052
24	**Jessi's Secret Language** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #12)	Martin/Chau	Graphix	9781338616071	3,041
25	**Chain of Thorns**	Cassandra Clare	McElderry	9781481431934	2,995

Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Green Eggs and Ham**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800165	28,341
2	**One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800134	23,609
3	**How to Catch a Leprechaun**	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781492632917	22,839
4	**It's Not Easy Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780394861029	21,237
5	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780544938090	18,544
6	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	17,672
7	**The Cat In the Hat**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800011	17,129
8	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	16,251
9	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	14,369
10	**You're My Little Honey Bunny**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684126187	12,804
11	**Happy Easter, Mouse!**	Numeroff/Bond	HarperFestival	9780694014224	12,450
12	**Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go!**	Seuss/Rabe	Random House	9780553520576	12,296
13	**Oh Say Can You Say Di-No-Saur?**	Worth/Haefele	Random House	9780679891147	12,056
14	**Fox in Socks**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800387	11,748
15	**Dt. Seuss's ABC**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800301	11,640
16	**There's No Place Like Space**	Rabe/Ruiz	Random House	9780679891154	11,128
17	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	10,465
18	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	10,432
19	**Goodnight Moon**	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	10,293
20	**Are You My Mother?**	P.D. Eastman	Random House	9780394800189	10,292
21	**Hippity, Hoppity, Little Bunny**	–	Cottage Door	9781680524772	10,192
22	**Go, Dog. Go!**	P.D. Eastman	Random House	9780394800202	10,108
23	**Dr. Seuss's Book of Colors**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9781524766184	9,965
24	**Never Touch a Grumpy Bunny!**	Greening/Lynch	Make Believe	9781800582682	9,812
25	**Construction Site: Spring Delight**	Rinker/Ford	Chronicle	9781797204314	9,448

Category Bestsellers | JAN. 29–MAR. 4, 2023

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Mystery

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Stone Maidens	Lloyd Devereux Richards	Thomas & Mercer	9781612186054	Trade Paperback
2	Encore in Death	J.D. Robb	St. Martin's	9781250284082	Hardcover
3	The Maid	Nita Prose	Ballantine	9780593356173	Trade Paperback
4	Storm Watch	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	Hardcover
5	The Red Book	Patterson/Ellis	Grand Central	9781538752821	Mass Market
6	The Cabinet of Dr. Leng	Preston/Child	Grand Central	9781538736777	Hardcover
7	The Thursday Murder Club	Richard Osman	Penguin Books	9781984880987	Trade Paperback
8	Burner	Mark Greaney	Berkley	9780593548103	Hardcover
9	Exiles	Jane Harper	Flatiron	9781250235350	Hardcover
10	Shadows Reel	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331293	Mass Market

Romance

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	It Ends with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781501110368	Trade Paperback
2	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	Trade Paperback
3	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	Trade Paperback
4	Ugly Love	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781476753188	Trade Paperback
5	Things We Hide from the Light	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	Trade Paperback
6	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	Trade Paperback
7	Reminders of Him	Colleen Hoover	Montlake	9781542025607	Trade Paperback
8	Things We Never Got Over	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781945631832	Trade Paperback
9	November 9	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781501110344	Trade Paperback
10	Secretly Yours	Tessa Bailey	Avon	9780063238985	Trade Paperback

Science Fiction

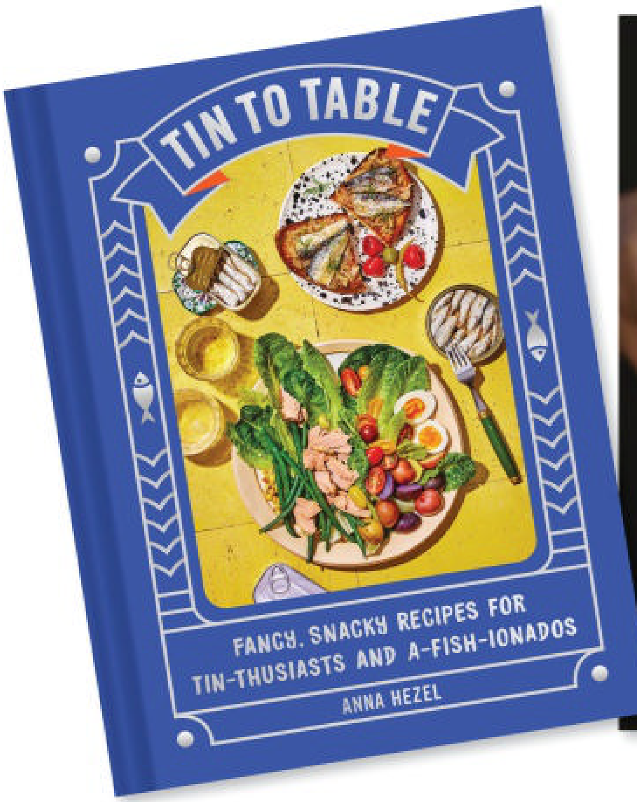
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	Project Hail Mary	Andy Weir	Ballantine	9780593135228	Trade Paperback
2	Children of Memory	Adrian Tchaikovsky	Orbit	9780316466400	Trade Paperback
3	The Three-Body Problem	Cixin Liu	Tor	9780765382030	Trade Paperback
4	Dune	Frank Herbert	Ace	9780441013593	Trade Paperback
5	Leviathan Falls	James S.A. Corey	Orbit	9780316332941	Trade Paperback
6	Station Eleven	Emily St. John Mandel	Vintage	9780804172448	Trade Paperback
7	Gideon the Ninth	Tamsyn Muir	Tordotcom	9781250313188	Trade Paperback
8	This Is How You Lose the Time War	El-Mohtar/Gladstone	Saga	9781534430990	Trade Paperback
9	Star Wars: The High Republic: The Battle of Jedha	George Mann	Random House Worlds	9780593597897	Hardcover
10	Children of Time	Adrian Tchaikovsky	Orbit	9780316452502	Trade Paperback

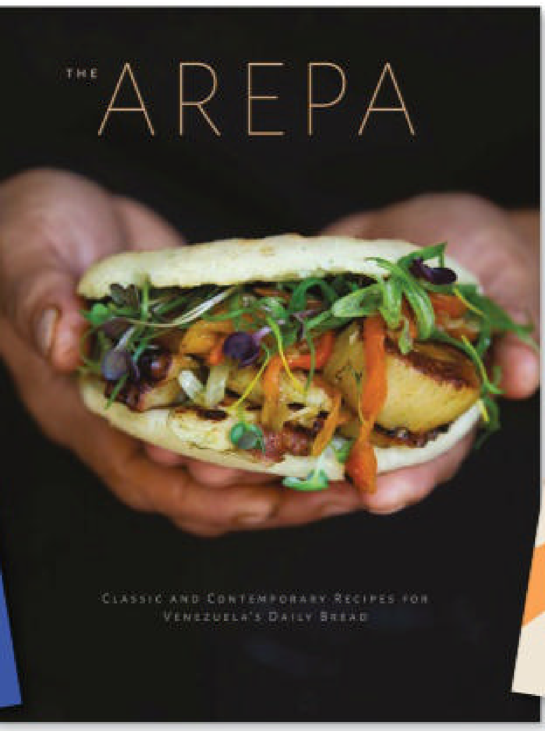
Fantasy

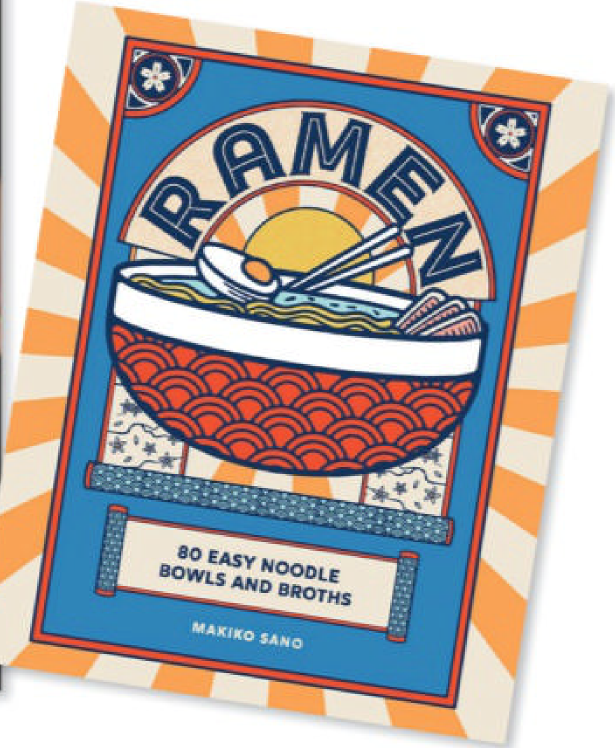
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	FORMAT
1	A Court of Thorns and Roses	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575569	Trade Paperback
2	A Court of Mist and Fury	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575583	Trade Paperback
3	A Court of Wings and Ruin	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575606	Trade Paperback
4	A Court of Silver Flames	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	Trade Paperback
5	A Court of Frost and Starlight	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635575620	Trade Paperback
6	Under the Whispering Door	TJ Klune	Tor	9781250217394	Trade Paperback
7	A Day of Fallen Night	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	9781635577921	Hardcover
8	Throne of Glass	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639730957	Trade Paperback
9	The Priory of the Orange Tree	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	9781635570304	Trade Paperback
10	Hell Bent	Leigh Bardugo	Flatiron	9781250313102	Hardcover

Fifty Shades of Pâté

FOCUSING ON A SINGLE INGREDIENT OR DISH CAN MAKE FOR A WIDE-RANGING COOKBOOK


TIN TO TABLE
FANCY, SNACKY RECIPES FOR TIN-THUSIASTS AND A-FISH-IONADOS
ANNA HEZEL


THE AREPA
CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY RECIPES FOR VENEZUELA'S DAILY BREAD


RAMEN
80 EASY NOODLE BOWLS AND BROTHS
MAKIKO SANO

By Pooja Makhijani

Single-subject cookbooks reflect their times, says Lisa Dyer, associate publisher at Welbeck Publishing Group. In the 1990s, she recalls, books touted of-the-moment appliances and equipment such as microwaves and juicers; slim, gift-y titles about a single ingredient, like the avocado, followed. Forthcoming books, Dyer says, speak to a market hungry for both simplicity and variety: "Even if I have one thing," the thinking goes, "I can build a meal around it."

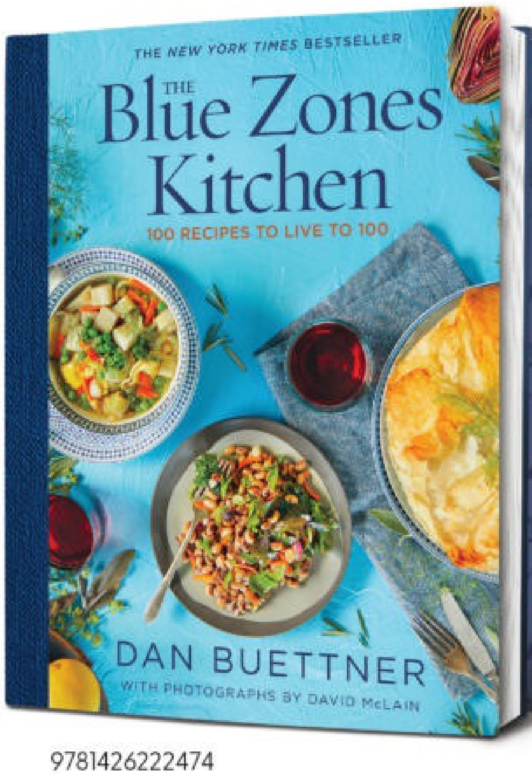
Refined tastes

In *Ramen*, a June release from Welbeck imprint OH! Life, that one thing is the familiar Japanese noodle soup, rendered by London restaurateur Makiko Sano in 80 recipes that emphasize ease and affordability. "Ramen is ubiquitous, popular, and endlessly customizable," Dyer says, explaining that Sano draws from her Japanese childhood and her Korean culinary education in foundational recipes for dashis and tares, and in dishes that incorporate fresh sea vegetables. "The book also includes TikTok-inspired takes on instant ramen," Dyer adds. "We want readers to have fun, and eat ramen all the time: for breakfast or instead of grandma's chicken soup when you're sick."

Anna Hezel, senior editor at Epicurious, emphasizes the versatility of canned seafood in *Tin to Table* (Chronicle, Apr.). "I'm part of the CannedSardines subreddit," she says. "It's tens of thousands of people who eat tinned fish and leave funny, nice little reviews about how they ate them and what they paired them with."

Packaged seafood, Hezel notes in the book's introduction, has made its way into "hundreds of dishes and cuisines around the

Great Books for the Foodie in Your Life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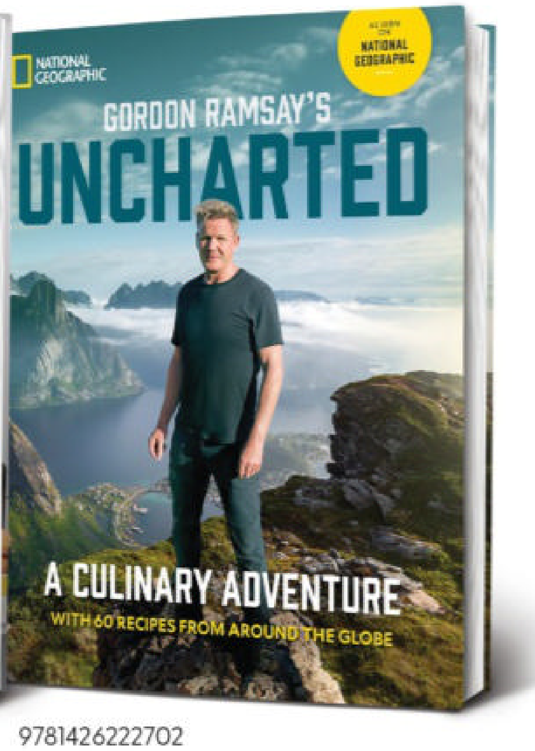
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world." She stresses its utility in the opening chapters: tinned mussels may be enjoyed straight out of the can; canned octopus is just as delicious as its fresh counterpart and far more affordable, too. "There's plenty of inspiration to be found here," according to *PW*'s review, in snacks (Vermouth Hour Potato Chips with Mussels, Olives & Piparras), mains (Rice Cooker Sardine Rice with Grated Ginger, Sweet Corn & Green Onions), and more. Eunjo Park, a 2020 *Food & Wine* best new chef, contributed a recipe for tuna kimbap. "The cheapest canned tuna mixed with gochujang for a spicy, fermented, sweet flavor," Hezel says. "It's insanely good. You won't believe that you're eating a $2 can of tuna."

The Arepa (Ryland Peters & Small, June) focuses on what Baltimore restaurateur Irena Stein sees as "an ambassador of Venezuelan cuisine." Millions of people have left Venezuela for political and economic reasons, she says, and "went everywhere in the world. Wherever they went, they brought arepas. I

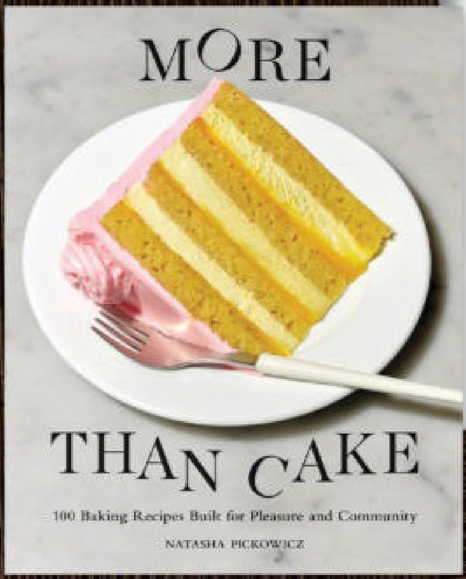
continued on p. 26

Who Are You Feeding?

PW talks with Natasha Pickowicz

© GRAY AND HERRIOTT

Natasha Pickowicz's debut cookbook, *More Than Cake* (Artisan, Apr.), showcases her distinctive aesthetic and her commitment to social justice. The James Beard Award–winning pastry chef is known for incorporating the unexpected—a glug of shoyu to zhuzh up peanut cookies or a handful of tulip petals to garnish a layer cake—and for her charity bake sales, which serve as a platform for resistance and change. Her June 2022 event at New York's Cherry Lane Theatre raised $22,000 for the Brigid Alliance, which offers financial and logistical support for people traveling to receive abortion care. Pickowicz spoke with *PW* about her influences, building trust with readers, and baking with purpose.



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What inspires your work?

I want to bring something unexpected to cake-making. It's an incredible tradition with so much variation and so many distinct styles. My mom is from China, and I grew up with flavors like adzuki bean and black sesame and soy sauce. It's fun to think about the canon of pastry, and bring in flavors that feel nostalgic to me. I wanted to speak to that and show people that these things are versatile.

Your creations look different from traditional bakes, too—why is that?

I don't want to make a sugar rose. I don't really know how to do that and I don't care to know. I feel way more inspired aesthetically by picking the fennel fronds from my backyard in Greenpoint [Brooklyn] or using the fig leaf from the tree that's growing outside of my window. A little stick with a leaf is incredibly pretty perched on top of a little piece of cake. There are beautiful things that are within our reach.

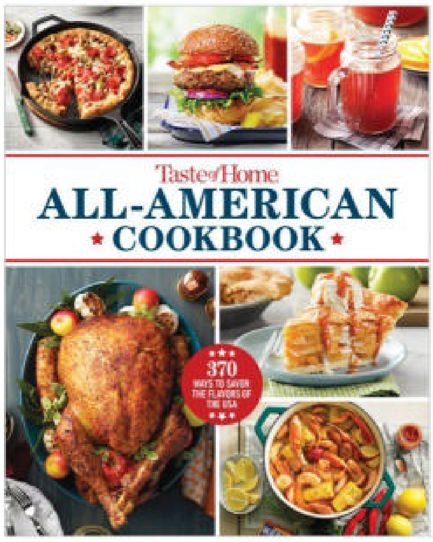
What do you want to convey to your readers?

I know that if I'm making a recipe from a book and it doesn't go the way that it's explained or what the photo looks like, that breaks my trust with the author. Things go wrong for me all the time. I've made every single mistake that you can make. But you can almost always save something or at least learn why it happened, and then you do it differently next time. What I hope for the reader is what I hope for myself when I'm looking at a recipe: am I learning something new? I provide a safety net in the text of every recipe in case something goes wrong. I want to communicate that sense of safety to a reader and hope that my text is persuasive enough so that people can dive into something that they wouldn't usually dive into.

What's the connection between baking and service?

I'm here to give you strategies for what to do with that muffin you make. Where does it go? Who are you feeding? Community organizing is incredibly empowering. We're not living in vacuums. We all have something that speaks to us. Once you start sharing with others, it's an intoxicating feeling where you're like, I'm grooving with people. I'm contributing. I'm doing something I believe in. Organizing doesn't have to be a grand gesture. Even if you bake a few things and sell them at your local wine shop or in the park and raise $50, that's great. It's not about the amount of money. It's about the feeling of doing and connecting with other people.

—P.M.



A CULINARY ROAD TRIP:

Spotlight on Taste of Home

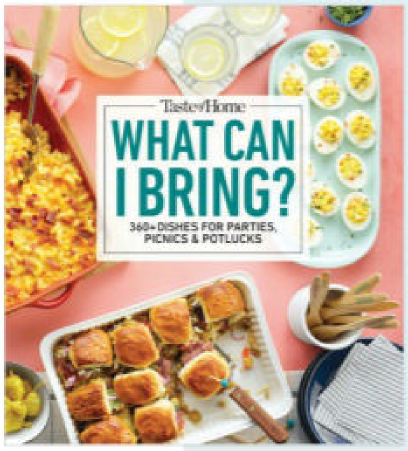
Taste of Home offers up hundreds of recipes for cooks of every stripe and tantalizing dishes for every gathering

This spring and summer, Taste of Home has something for everyone, from home cooks to experienced chefs. With the *Taste of Home All-American Cookbook*, readers will find hundreds of recipes that take the guesswork out of preparing traditional favorites, from apple pie to Southern fried chicken. *All-American* includes dinnertime favorites such as meatloaf and mashed potatoes, and pot roast surrounded by rich savory gravy. This iconic cookbook also serves up our nation's regional foods made famous by travelers from across the country, including New York cheesecake, Detroit-style pizza, Philly cheesesteaks, and New England clam chowder.

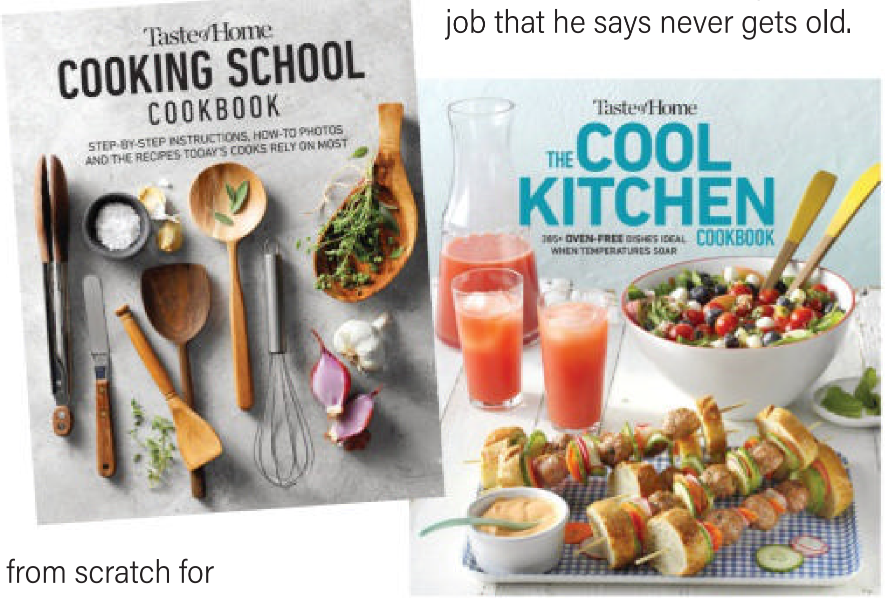
"It's like taking a road trip or a tasting tour without leaving your kitchen," says Taste of Home content director Mark Hagen. "We filled the book with 370 iconic dishes home cooks rely on. From all-American hamburgers to apple brown betty, readers will find the comforting classics and regional recipes that make America so delicious."

For cooks looking to up their culinary game from the traditional to the sublime, *Taste of Home Cooking School Cookbook* teaches readers the basics of good cooking, whether starting from scratch for beginners or tweaking the skills of an experienced home cook. With 181 recipes, how-to photos, step-by-step instructions, and test-kitchen tips, readers will be able to finesse the most flavor from ingredients and learn to master sauces that will impress guests. An added benefit is 40 QR codes that, when scanned, allow readers to watch the Taste of Home Test Kitchen staff put together recipes from the cookbook.

"Adding QR codes to *Taste of Home Cooking School Cookbook* was a great opportunity to help readers," says Hagen. "The book features the dishes, tips, techniques, and methods every home cook should know, so offering how-to videos and additional recipes via digital content made perfect sense. No matter how experienced someone is in the kitchen, they're going to find smart and time-saving tips, along with how-to photos that walk cooks through various methods and techniques to make their cooking better."



Having worked at Taste of Home for more than two decades, Hagen has tested and tasted hundreds of recipes from cooks nationwide. It's a part of the job that he says never gets old.



"All Taste of Home cookbooks feature recipes shared by today's home cooks," Hagen says. "From experienced pros to kitchen newbies, everyone has recipes they turn to regularly. We're so honored that these cooks send those cherished recipes to us to share with the world."

ALL-AMERICAN SUMMER FARE

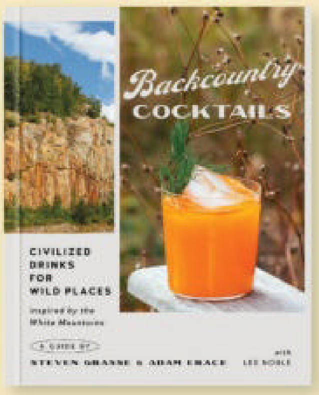
Taste of Home What Can I Bring? picks up on the all-American tradition of get-togethers, whether family or holiday, bridal or baby shower, barbecue or tailgate, providing 360 make-and-take dishes meant to serve a crowd and travel well. Whether for elegant cocktail parties or potluck dinners, each recipe is tailored to a gathering. And Taste of Home even offers tips on what *not* to bring to a celebration.

"Never bring an item that's going to tax the time of your host or hostess," Hagen says. "Don't bring something that needs lots of assembly onsite. Don't plan on frosting a cake in the host's kitchen during the party. Bring something that's largely ready to set out. Those are the sorts of recipes readers will find in *Taste of Home What Can I Bring?*"

And for those summer gatherings or family dinners when even the thought of turning on an oven makes us reach for a glass of iced tea, *The Cool Kitchen Cookbook* takes the heat out of cooking. This book offers perfect summer salads, no-bake cookies, and refreshing fruit smoothies along with complete nutrition information for every recipe. *The Cool Kitchen Cookbook* also includes easy-to-prepare recipes designed for kitchen appliances like slow cookers, air fryers, and instant pots, along with step-by-step instructions and prep and cook timelines for those who are on a schedule or even those of us who are intimidated by these appliances. Of course, all Taste of Home cookbooks include a host of full-color photos, as well as the tips and Test Kitchen secrets from the experts that make these cookbooks the taste of America.

Have Your Kayak and Eat Well Too

Camp cooking needn't be limited to franks, beans, and foil-wrapped potatoes; it can also mean skillet enchiladas and fireside sangria. New cookbooks speak to the possibility of great meals in the great outdoors.



■ **Backcountry Cocktails**

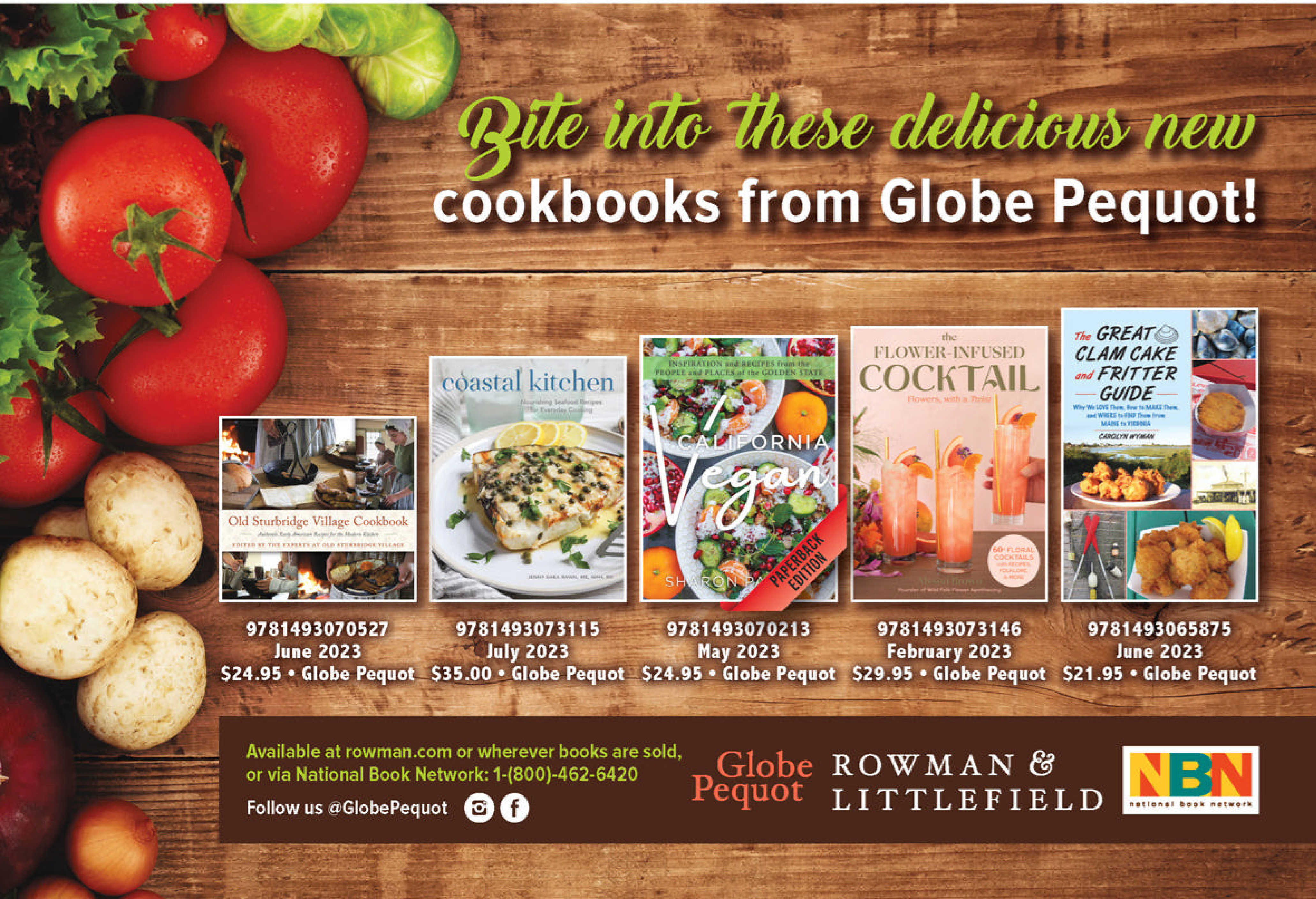
Steven Grasse and Adam Erace. Running Press, May

The team behind *The Cocktail Workshop* take their behind-the-bar knowledge outside, with 48 beverages—12 for each season—inspired by New Hampshire's White Mountains. A spring Forager's Mash incorporates wild strawberries and ginger vodka, while winter's Alpine Cocoa is spiked with Chartreuse. Distiller Grasse and food and travel writer Erace emphasize portability and suggest substitutions for hard-to-find ingredients.

■ **The Clever Camper Cookbook**

Megan Winter-Barker and Simon Fielding. CICO, June

Fielding, whose family owns the Apple Pie Cafe and Bakery in England's Lake District, and Winter-Barker present 40 recipes from their camper-van adventures around Europe. In addition to sharing how-tos for dishes including pasta Bolognese (whose leftovers convert handily into chili con carne the next day), the authors offer suggestions for camping with children, preparing appealing festival foods, and enjoying date nights under the stars. (This release updates a 2018 edition with new recipes.)



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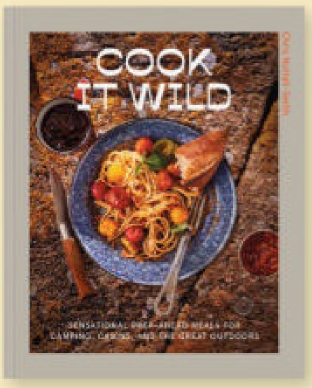
Cook It Wild

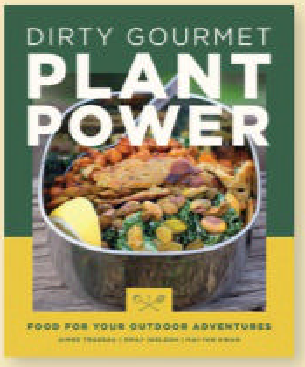
Chris Nuttall-Smith. Clarkson Potter, May


COOK IT WILD
SENSATIONAL PREP-AHEAD MEALS FOR CAMPING, CABINS, AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Top Chef Canada judge Nuttall-Smith explains his prep-ahead approach to outdoor cooking in this collection. The instructions for each recipe—campfire paella, lamb kebabs and roti, pecan sticky buns—are divided into "at home" and "at camp" sections. Much of the work is done inside, before departure, and then dropped into a pot or on a grill outdoors after arrival. Where relevant, he notes how long foods will keep; after thawing, mac and cheese lasts three days, while buttermilk powder pancake mix is good for one month.

Dirty Gourmet Plant Power

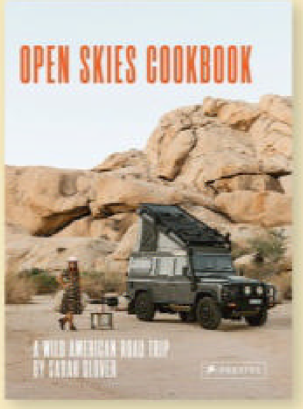
Aimee Trudeau, Emily Nielson, and Mai-Yan Katherine Kwan. Skipstone, June


DIRTY GOURMET
PLANT POWER
FOOD FOR YOUR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

The authors of *Dirty Gourmet* return with 126 plant-based recipes suitable for play dates in the park as well as longer wilderness outings. Meals span morning to evening and embrace an international flair—mochi pancake sandwiches (breakfast), saag tofu (entree), mango tapioca pudding (dessert)—with chapters devoted to meal planning and outdoor cooking techniques.

The Open Skies Cookbook

Sarah Glover. Prestel, Apr.


OPEN SKIES COOKBOOK
A WILD AMERICAN ROAD TRIP
BY SARAH GLOVER
PRESTEL

In this combination guidebook, photojournal, and recipe compilation, Glover, an Australian chef, documents an American road trip in 70 recipes (and several travel-ready cars). She reflects on her connection to various U.S. landscapes—the deserts of the Southwest, New England's craggy coastline—and whips up mountain trout, hung steaks with fire-roasted vegetables and farkleberry dressing, planked salmon with lemon yogurt, and a crawfish boil along the way. —P.M.

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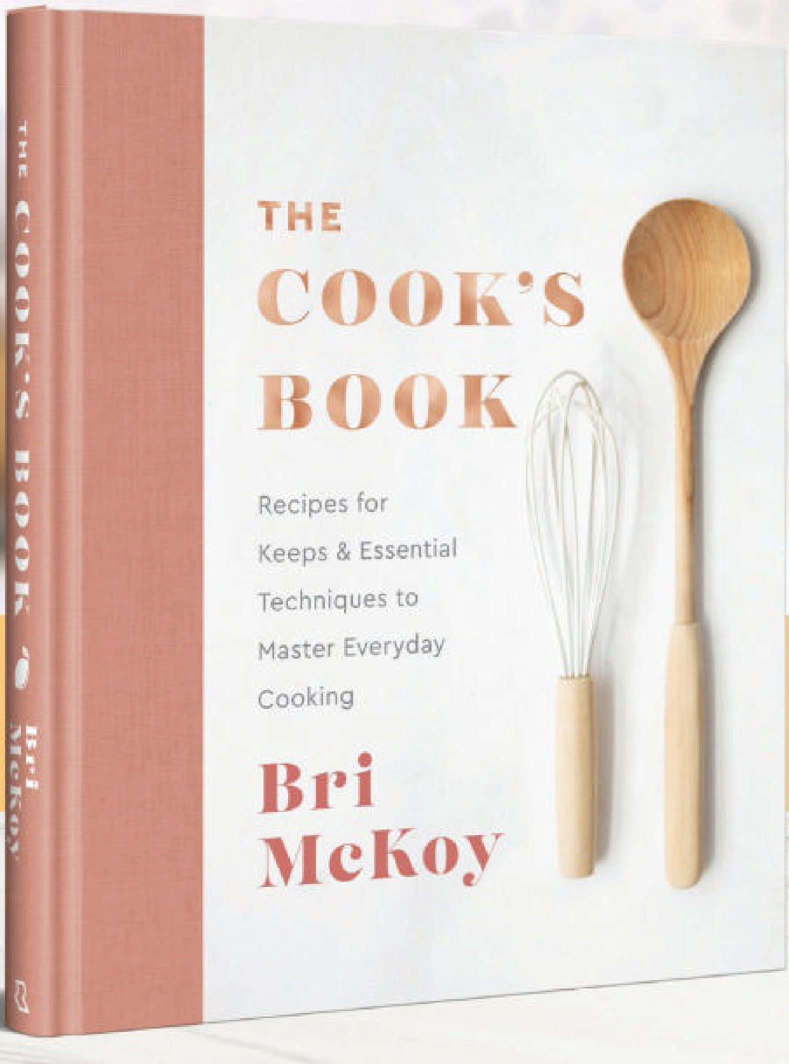
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continued from p. 22

want to honor this wonderful, important aspect of our gastronomy, which started before colonial times and has stayed in everybody's household every single day."

Stein's favorite recipes are for cheese arepa, which "every child takes to school," and pabellon arepa, which she calls Venezuela's national dish. "They're important in our culture, and they're damn delicious." She sees the book's Asian-, Mediterranean- and Middle Eastern–inspired variations as a celebration of the Venezuelan diaspora. "Every Latin country has its pockets of bread," she says. "And every flavor of every culture fits in it so well."

Total immersion

Baking cookbooks, a category unto themselves, are ripe for the single-subject treatment.

When *Brown Butter Blondie* blogger Heather Mubarak noticed that her sandwich cookies—whoopie pies, macarons, copycat Oreos—were popular on her social media channels, she knew she'd hit upon a book idea. In her debut, *Stuffed* (Chronicle, Apr.), she shares 65 recipes for stuffed cookies, including ones she says are "a little less typical," such as carrot cake cookies with brown butter cream cheese frosting and rosemary pine nut sables with whipped goat cheese. The book's final chapter has recipes for 30 fillings, among them eggnog buttercream, Meyer lemon curd, and slow-churn ice cream. "I want readers to mix and match," she says. "Because really, no two cookie cravings are the same."

Erica Council, the chef-owner of Atlanta's Bomb Biscuits, speaks to the African American heritage of her signature quick bread in *Still We Rise* (Clarkson Potter, Aug.). "I grew up in this industry and I saw nothing but African American men and women baking," she says. "Everything that elevated my own baking style came from them."

Council is the granddaughter of soul food chef Mildred "Mama Dip" Council, who cooked and baked to support the civil rights movement, and many of the book's recipes are rooted in family histories. For example, her roasted peach biscuit is an homage to her great-aunt's "shortcake biscuit-type concoction, which she cut in wedges, like a cake," she says. "They're not the prettiest, but they remind me of what she made."

Council hopes her single-subject book will lead readers to cookbooks that shaped African American culinary history, like those by Norma Jean and Carole Darden, Cleora Butler, and Freda DeKnight. "And all these extraordinary African American men and women who were fermenting potatoes to make biscuits in 1939," she says. "I want people to know their names."

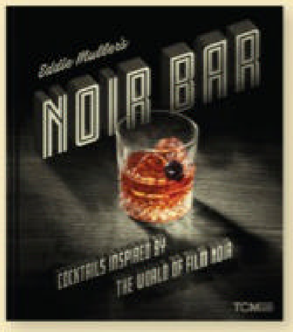
What's the big idea?

Narrowing the focus to a single ingredient can inspire introspection and exploration, says Artisan publisher Lia Ronnen. A pair of her spring titles highlight ingredients that foodies "obsess over," she says. "People who are really interested in food love going narrow and deep. They have definite opinions about tomatoes and oysters."

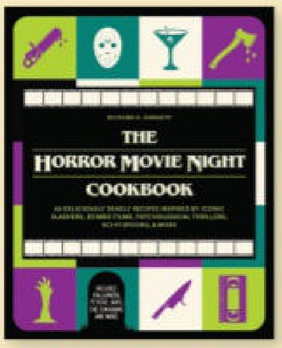
In *The Joy of Oysters* (May), *Wine Enthusiast* food editor Nils Bernstein shares tips for buying, storing, and shucking oysters, and, Ronnen says, debunks the notion that oysters should only be eaten during certain months. Recipes include Korean oyster fritters (gul jeon), oyster fricassee, and oyster shooters. In *Simply Tomato*, James Beard Award–winning food writer Martha Holmberg stresses using the right tomato for the right preparation—a beefsteak to roast with fish, cherry tomatoes for a salad—and embraces the convenience of canned varieties.

Setting the

What's better than watching a favorite movie or rereading a beloved book? Enjoying a themed dish or cocktail alongside it. Kierra Sondereker, associate editor at Ulysses Press, says that for *The Horror Movie Night Cookbook*, author Richard S. Sargent aimed to remain faithful to the genre's grittiness while suggesting recipes to enhance a watch party, striking a balance between "more traditional movie-related food," such as microwave popcorn two ways, "and fun plays on food that was actually featured in the movies." This season brings numerous tie-in cookbooks titles that invite fans to experience old favorites in a new way; here's a sampling.



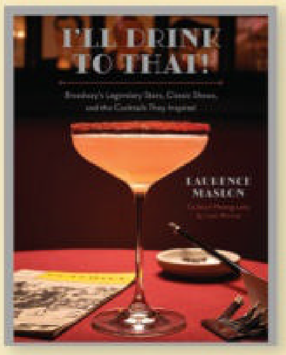
■ **Eddie Muller's Noir Bar**
Eddie Muller. Running Press, May
Muller, host of TCM's *Noir Alley* and the author of books including *The Art of Noir* and *Dark City*, brings his movie expertise to the world of cocktails. More than 50 traditional and original drink recipes celebrate film noir flicks and stars, such as the Sailor Beware, a Muller creation that honors Orson Welles's 1948 thriller *The Lady from Shanghai*. Original movie posters and stills round out the package.



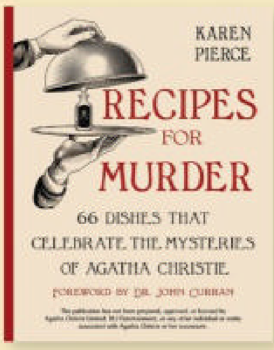
■ **The Horror Movie Night Cookbook**
Richard S. Sargent. Ulysses, July
Actor and filmmaker Sargent debuts with 60 recipes drawing on genre classics—*Cujo*, *Jaws*, *Psycho*, and more. For instance, Crawling Steak is a more palatable riff on a memorably disgusting scene from *Poltergeist*, while a Campfire Sour might comfort scaredy-cats after a viewing of *The Blair Witch Project*.

■ **I'll Drink to That!**
Laurence Maslon and Joan Marcus. Weldon Owen, May

(cui)Scene



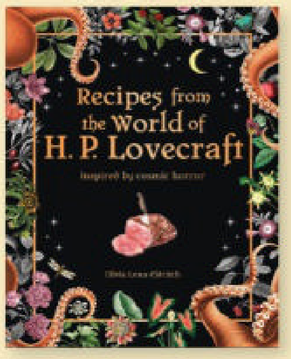
Thirty recipes for classic cocktails, originals, and those that fall somewhere in between pay homage to Broadway in the latest from Maslon, a professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and the author of several theater books. A Sidecar Named Desire, for instance, nods to the Tennessee Williams play by adding Peychaud's bitters, which originated in New Orleans, to standard sidecar specs. Archival images of performances accompany the text; veteran theatrical photographer Marcus contributes the drinks photos, taken at Sardi's in the theater district.


KAREN PIERCE
RECIPES FOR MURDER
66 DISHES THAT CELEBRATE THE MYSTERIES OF AGATHA CHRISTIE
FOREWORD BY DR. JOHN CURRAN

■ **Recipes for Murder**

Karen Pierce. Countryman, Aug.

Self-described Agatha Christie superfan Pierce pairs each of the mystery writer's 66 novels with a food or drink recipe in her debut. Canapés Diane, for instance, is among the dishes on the deadly menu in *Three Act Tragedy*; lobster salad, meanwhile, is the sort of elegant fare Hercule Poirot might have enjoyed while traveling by plane, as he does in 1935's *Death in the Clouds.*


Recipes from the World of H.P. Lovecraft
Inspired by cosmic horror

■ **Recipes from the World of H.P. Lovecraft**

Olivia Luna Eldritch. Thunder Bay, July

This debut compilation is organized by course, from "Breaking Fast," "Lighter Bites," and "Strange Feastings" (heartier fare) through "Toothsome Sweets" and "Potions & Concoctions" (drinks). Vintage-style illustrations accompany contemporary food photography, bringing to life Cthulhu Tentacles, a calamari dish; Moon-tree Wine, named for a plot point in the Lovecraft novella "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath"; and other "recipes inspired by cosmic horror."

—Vivian Nguyen

"People like to become instant experts; that's part of the intention of these books," Ronnen says.

Rhubarb (TouchWood, May) by chef and photographer Søren Staun Petersen speaks to the same sort of readership, and elevates the spring ingredient beyond pies and crisps. Petersen's 35 recipes include savory preparations, such as pizza bianca, and sweets, such as rhubarb banana bread, as well as compotes, chutneys, and drinks. In *Yogurt & Whey* (Norton, out now), Homa

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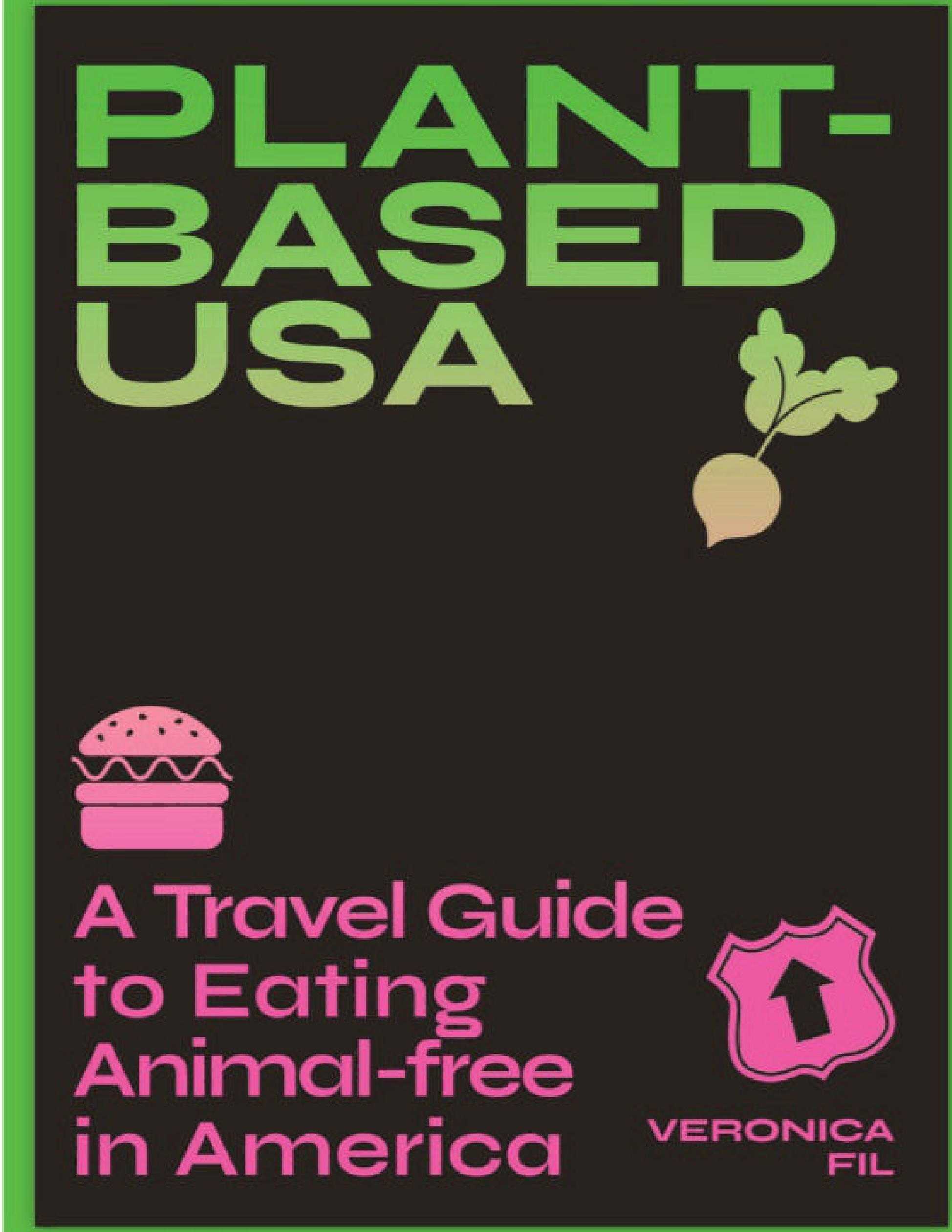

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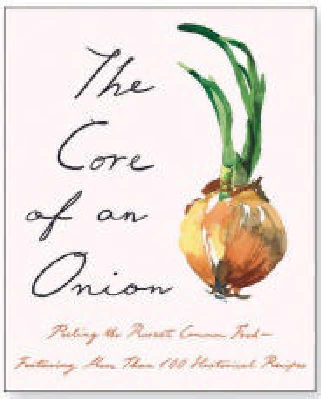


Dashtaki, founder of artisanal yogurt brand White Moustache, highlights whey, a by-product of traditional yogurt-making practices. She employs whey as the star in labneh and kashak, and in a supporting role in ghormeh sabzi, lemon meringue pie, and pineapple martinis. *PW*'s starred review called Dashtaki's debut an "edifying and delicious exploration of Zoroastrian cuisine."

Michigan chef Abra Berens's previous books addressed vegetables (*Ruffage*) and beans and grains (*Grist*); her next outing, *Pulp* (Chronicle, Apr.), which incorporates fruit at every meal, "will have home chefs heading to the farmers market or produce aisle with renewed confidence," according to *PW*'s review. Chapters are divided by fruit (drupelet berries, pears, plums) and further by technique (raw, poached, stewed). Her one-pan Sunday roast uses baked apples; she tops coconut tapioca pudding with roasted mulberries and lime.

Similar to Berens, Mark Kurlansky has written several well-regarded single-subject books, including *Cod*, *Salt*, and *Milk!*. With the forthcoming *The Core of an Onion* (Bloomsbury, July), he peels back the allium's layers through science, art, mythology, and 100 historical recipes. "Onions are both commonplace and unusual: they're the only vegetable with a built-in defense mechanism to attack mammals who try to eat them," he says. "They're also ubiquitous around the world, but because of their strangeness, they've taken on all kinds of meanings in different cultures and are used in a lot of ways." He packs the book with historical context, including "the whole story of how sweet onions ended up in Texas. The British didn't want to waste their land growing onions, so they grew them in Bermuda. Then the U.S. used tariffs to destroy Bermuda onions and grew them in Texas instead."

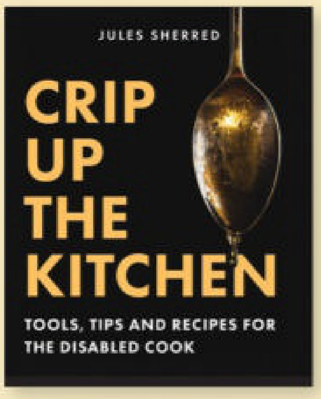
Kurlansky, like other authors and editors interviewed for this piece, uses his narrow lens as a window onto a larger vista: "You're learning a lot about the world when you look at these seemingly small things." ■

Pooja Makhijani is a writer and editor in New Jersey.

Open Kitchen

Cooking and baking can be difficult for many people, whether due to injury, cognitive issues, or physical disability. *PW* spoke with the authors of two spring titles that combat ableism in the kitchen, providing strategies that make it easier to prepare good meals at home.

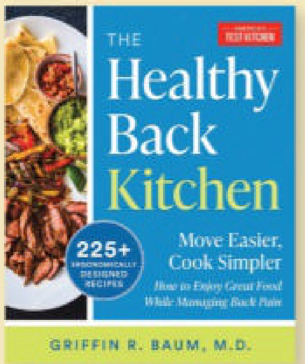
"Everyone needs to eat; it's a fundamental need," says Jules Sherred, who blogs at *Disabled Kitchen and Garden* and is the debut author of *Crip Up the Kitchen* (TouchWood, May). "But the kitchen is the most ableist room in the house—a torture device." The book's 50 recipes rely on electric pressure cookers, air fryers, and bread machines—a tactic many enthusiastic home cooks dismiss as "not real cooking." Sherred, who is disabled and neurodivergent, disagrees. "On social media, we're met with, 'You're lazy,' or 'Why don't you just try harder?' " he says, but "this isn't something to overcome. What can I do to live with it and feed myself and not hurt myself in the process?"



Sherred's dishes span a variety of cuisines influenced, he says, by his upbringing in diverse communities in British Columbia—think pressure cooker tahdig, air fryer Thai winter squash soup, and bread machine roti. Chapters group each recipe by the amount of effort required to get it on the table. "I want disabled and neurodivergent people to have enjoyment in the kitchen," he says. "It's also a bit of a social justice book—I want to challenge readers' unconscious biases."

America's Test Kitchen collaborated with neurosurgeon Griffin Baum on *The Healthy Back Kitchen* (May), which likewise aims to improve kitchen accessibility through 125 recipes written to minimize prep time. "Almost every patient who comes through my practice says that their chronic pain keeps them from being able to cook for themselves, cook for their family, and entertain," Baum says.

The book opens with a primer on back anatomy, then outlines best practices for an ergonomic kitchen, whether the cook works standing or seated. Recipes specify points in the process when the cook can take a break, and suggest shortcuts to reduce pain and fatigue, such as buying bagged florets for a broccoli, chickpea, and avocado salad or jarred roasted red peppers for steak tips with spicy cauliflower. "You can still make what you want," Baum says, "but in such a way that it's not going to set you back for the rest of the week."



Chronic pain often sends people into isolation, and Baum hopes his readers "develop a sense of confidence when it comes to cooking, and then want to share that with their friends or their families or their loved ones," he says. "I want the reader to feel seen; I want them to feel validated. You can cook and enjoy food, and you can do it in your own home on good days and bad days." —P.M.

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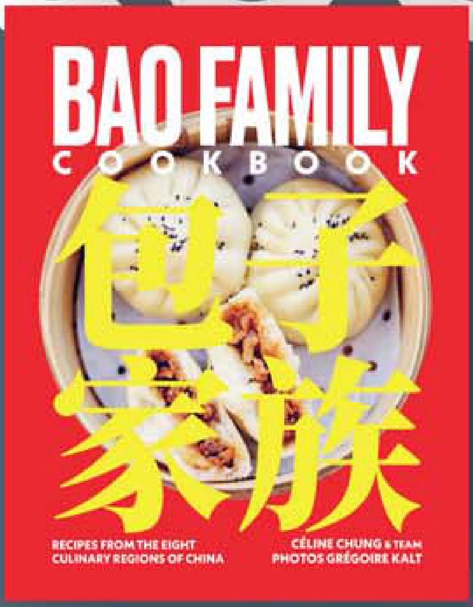
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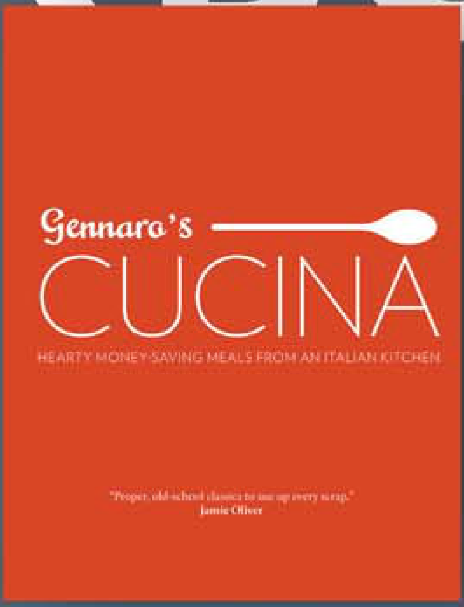
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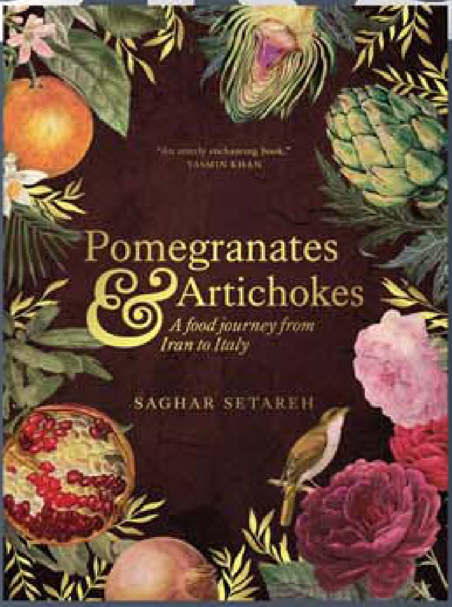
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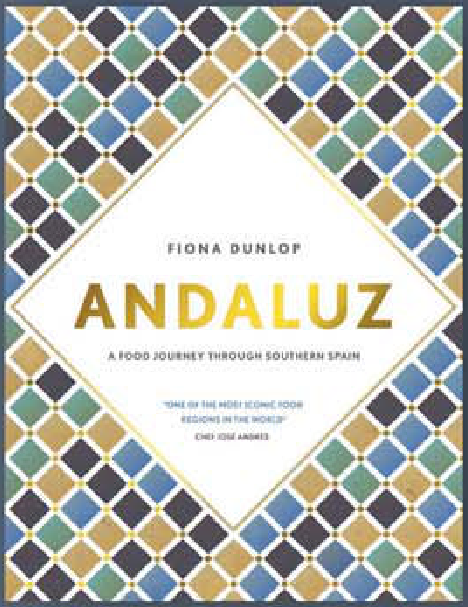
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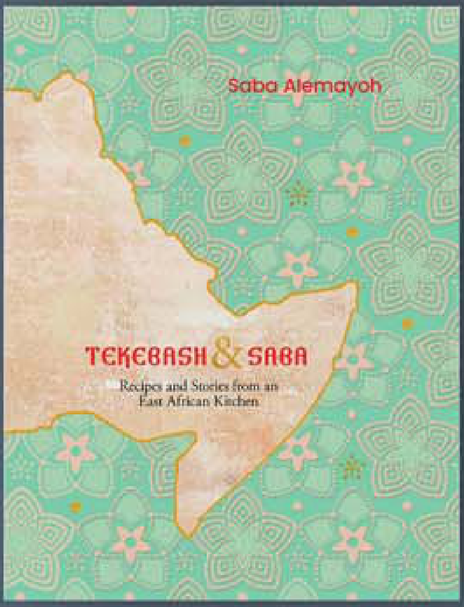
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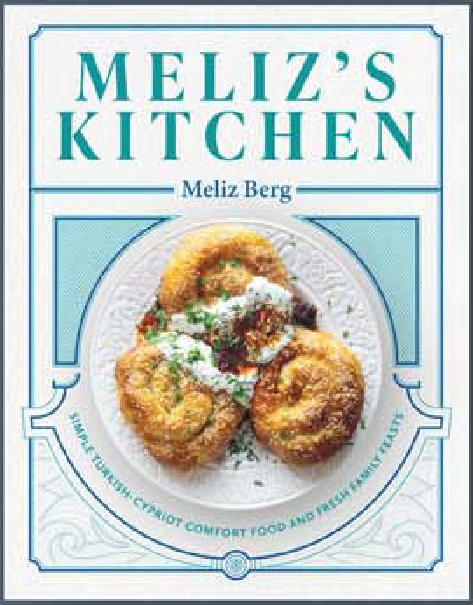
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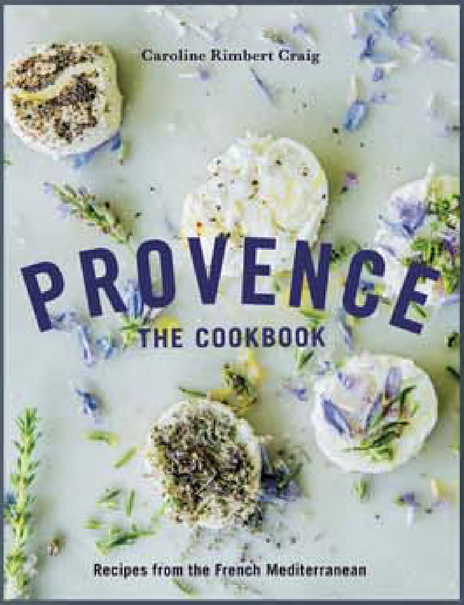
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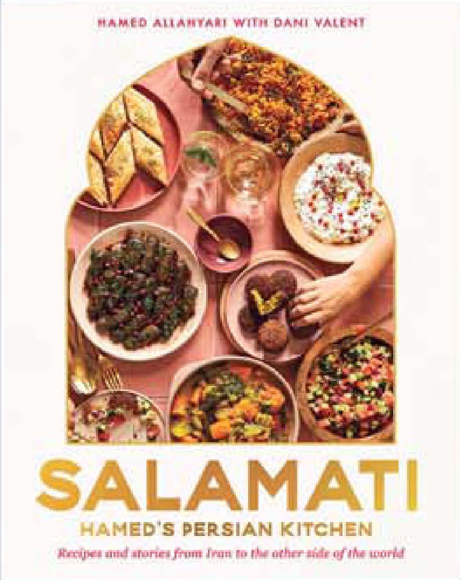
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MYTH AND MIDDLE GRADE

Fantasy surges again in the category in the wake of Percy Jackson

By Shannon Maughan

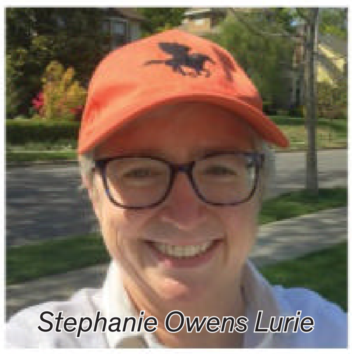
Fantasy stories for middle graders have always had a devoted following—the genre is home to numerous beloved classics, award winners, and bestselling franchises. And of course, myths are literally tales as old as time, with the classical variety—Greek and Roman—routinely being taught in many school curricula. But in 2005, when author Rick Riordan blended these two forms with his own brand of snarky humor and action in *The Lightning Thief*, the inaugural title of his Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, the result was something notably innovative.

The Lightning Thief introduced 12-year-old Percy, who finds out he's a demigod living in contemporary times when the Greek gods still rule. As the book gained fans and racked up sales, it spawned a media brand and sparked a seemingly voracious appetite for fiction rooted in mythology—of all kinds. To help meet some of that demand, Riordan and Disney Hyperion launched the Rick Riordan Presents imprint in 2018, headed by Riordan's editor Stephanie Owens Lurie with input from Riordan. The imprint is devoted to publishing "great middle grade authors from underrepresented cultures and backgrounds, to let them tell their own stories inspired by the mythology and folklore of their own heritage," according to Riordan's website.

These developments, in concert with the publishing industry's ongoing efforts to publish more diverse authors and stories, have resulted in a rich new wave of mythology-based fantasy adventures for middle grade readers. We asked editors of some of the new and forthcoming books in this robust subgenre to share their views about its growth.

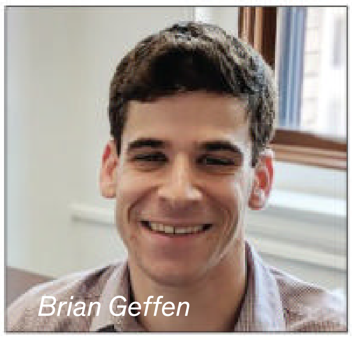
The Riordan factor

The editors we spoke with are quick to point out the very long and treasured history of mythology-based fantasy novels that existed well before Percy Jackson ever made the scene, several of them citing C.S. Lewis as among the authors who mastered the approach. "The appeal of this type of fantasy is evergreen—from Wonderland to Narnia, there's a timeless allure to the idea of discovering a magical world that exists within or alongside our own," says Kristin Rens, executive editor at Balzer + Bray (and editor of *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston).

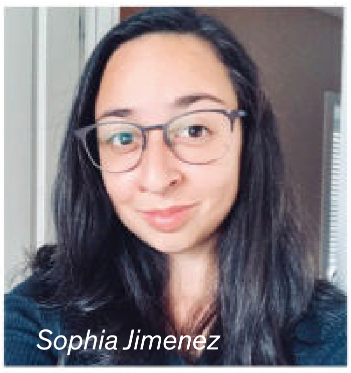


Stephanie Owens Lurie

Kristin Rens



Brian Geffen



Sophia Jimenez

Meghan McCullough

But editors are just as enthusiastic when crediting Riordan with influencing the exposure and status that the subgenre sees today. As Brian Geffen, senior editor at Henry Holt (and editor of the Pilar Ramirez duology by Julian Randall) notes, "Undoubtedly Rick Riordan Presents has been at the forefront of a recent surge in middle grade fantasy series drawing on identities, mythologies, and cultures historically underrepresented in kid lit, as opposed to European mythology."

Sophia Jimenez, associate editor at Atheneum (and editor of *The Enchanted Life of Valentina Mejía* by Alexandra Alessandri), explains how she sees Riordan's role in expanding the space for fantasies rooted in mythology. "Riordan's popularity started a really wonderful movement of writers and publishers asking, 'What other mythologies can we build an adventure story around?' and actually seeing stories about, say, Latin American mythology as having the potential to engage a wide audience," she says. "Fantasy stories drawing from mythology have become far more diverse in their inspirations, and Riordan's books were absolutely a factor that led to that."

Riordan's stamp has been clearly established, observes Meghan McCullough, an editor at HarperCollins's Inkyard Press imprint (and editor of *Ring of Solomon* by Aden Polydoros). "As an editor, the phrase 'for fans of Rick Riordan' has become shorthand for 'this is a middle grade science fiction–fantasy rich with cultural or religious folklore and mythology,'" she says. "It's certainly its own middle grade flavor."

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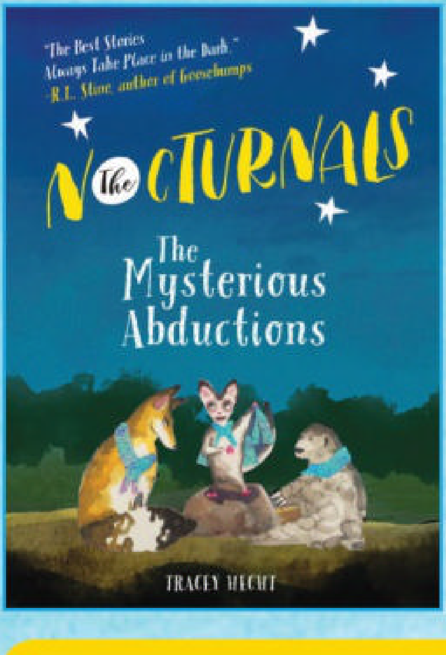
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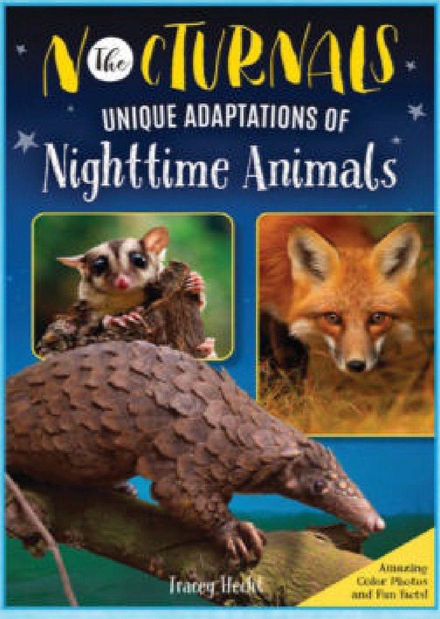
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The hooks

Liesa Abrams

"Fantasy adventures are just fun!" Jimenez says, reflecting on what readers like about this kind of book. "I think kids have always been fascinated by stories that ask, 'What if the myths were real? What crazy adventures would a kid like me get into?' And the 'like me' part is key to why we still need more of these stories. The most successful books in this genre have characters who are at least a little relatable to everyone—but at the same time, as a kid you want to feel like your own culture is as exciting and magical as, say, the myths of ancient Greece and Rome. With every new set of myths covered in books like these, another group of fantasy-loving kids feels seen, and feels like their heritage is the stuff of adventures too."

Lurie believes that in many ways middle grade readers are the perfect audience for a mythology-fantasy blend. "Middle graders are still trying to determine who they are and how they fit into the world, and many haven't yet become too cynical to delight in wonder and magic," she says. "Through these books, they can step into a hero's shoes for a little while and experience a life-changing journey involving all sorts of amazing creatures, fearsome foes, and fanciful settings. The most relatable heroes are flawed ones who are challenged over the course of the story, and in these fantasies, they always come out on top. Stir in a fast pace, high stakes, surprising twists and turns, lots of laughs, a distinctive narrative voice, and an imaginative sparkle, and you've got an irresistible piece of entertainment."

Similarly, Liesa Abrams, v-p and editor-in-chief of the new Labyrinth Road imprint at Random House Children's Books (and editor of *Momo Arashima Steals the Sword of the Wind* by Misa Sugiura), lists escapism and relatability among the appealing elements of this genre. "I like to say that I believe in publishing books that can help kids escape where they are while feeling seen for who they are," she says. "That's part of the fundamental meaning behind the Labyrinth Road imprint name, in fact." So it makes perfect sense "that the wonderful escapist reading experience of a fantasy story blended with the universal emotions captured by mythological characters would appeal to kids. Watching gods display their fallibility and human vulnerabilities on a supersized scale while kids save the day is the ultimate coming-of-age metaphor for kid readers who are just starting to recognize that adults don't always have all the answers."

McCullough sees adventures in the Riordan vein as getting at "something vital in kid lit: kids saving the day, stepping into their power, and living out loud, no adult assistance necessary. By nature of the enormity of what these stories tackle—gods made manifest, worlds traversed—they naturally slough off the 'adults are still in charge' of it all, which can sometimes be hard to do in stories written for a middle grade audience." She believes that these often culturally rich tales can "provide the most excellent kind of mirror for young readers—a joyous one that shows underrepresented readers images of themselves having epic adventures, saving the day instead of needing to be saved, and having fun."

Seals of approval

Fantasy adventure tales inspired by mythology aren't just favorites among young readers; they also score high on the likeability chart with teachers and librarians. Lurie, like most of the editors we spoke with, believes that these books do double duty. While the humor and

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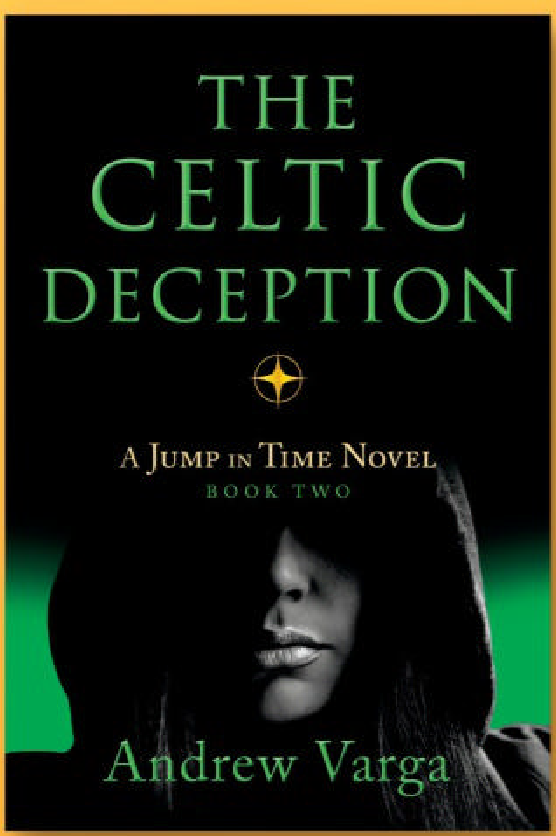
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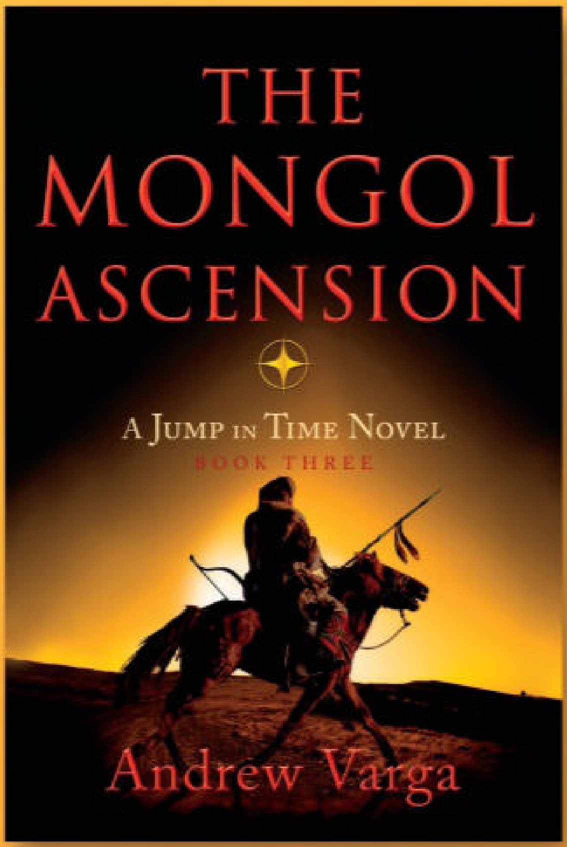
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high-stakes action keep kids glued to the page, she notes, they also “subtly teach timeless and universal life lessons about such things as how to conduct oneself, how to respect and look out for others, why family is important, and what it means to be an ambassador for one’s culture. In addition, teachers can use the books as an engaging way to introduce the original source material and examine how the author adapted it.”

The “spoonful of sugar” quality is also something McCullough knows that gatekeepers appreciate. “These kinds of stories are like blending up extra vegetables in your favorite spaghetti sauce so you don’t taste them,” she says. “They’re educational without being kid repellent. It’s no surprise they’re a total dream for teachers, librarians, and booksellers.”

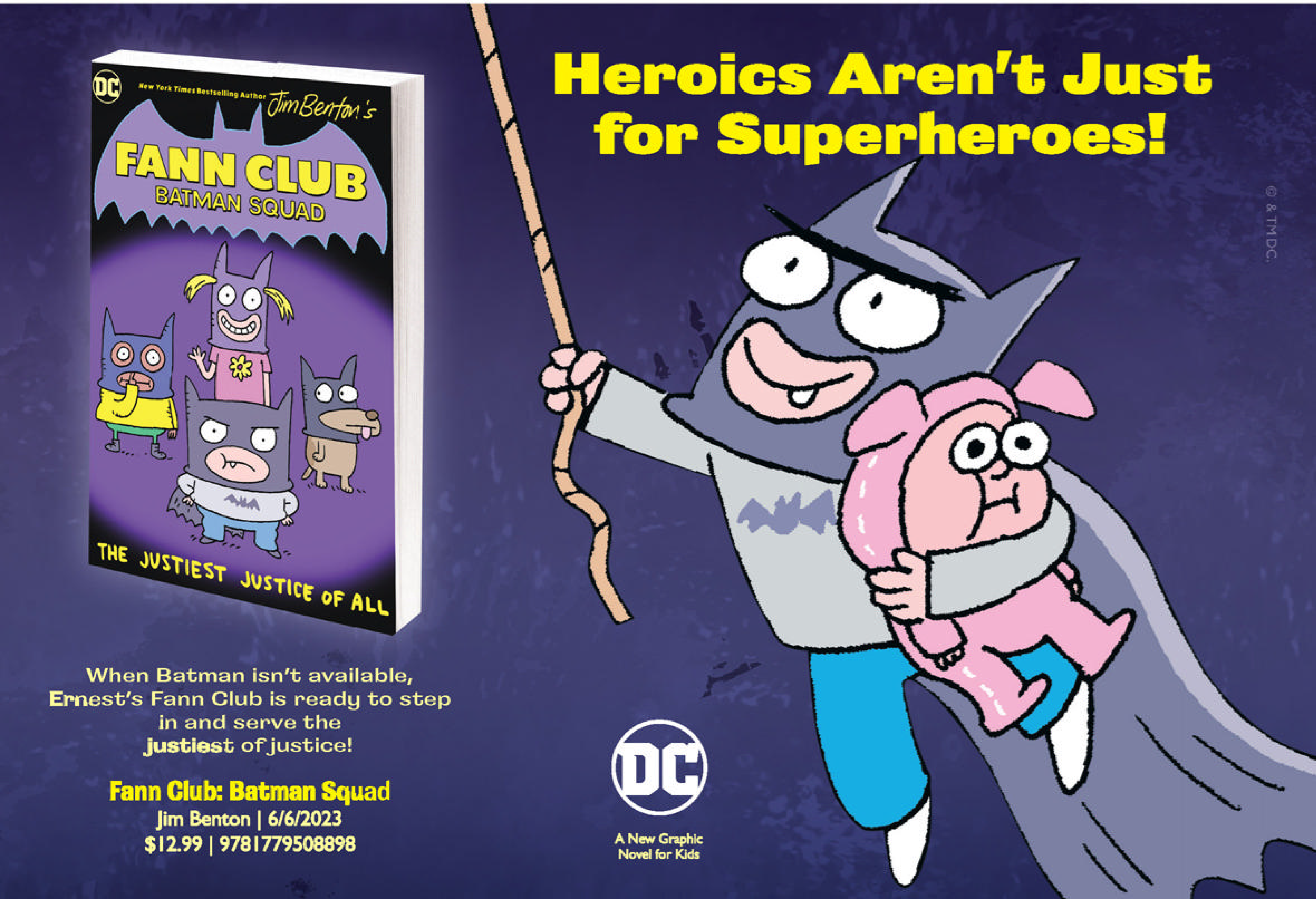
Elizabeth Lee

Geffen agrees. “These books manage to pull in readers with the ‘candy’—exciting action, spellbinding magic, and kick-butt heroes—while also offering deeper substance,” he says. “Whether it’s the history of the Trujillo dictatorship like we see in Julian Randall’s series, or the inspection of identity, culture, and so much more with curriculum tie-ins and educational value. Kids end up exploring these deep themes and meaningful coming-of-age moments, all by luring them in with the more commercial, high-concept set pieces.”

Looking ahead

The editors we spoke with feel strongly that this newer flavor of mythology-inspired fantasies will have a long lifespan. “I think this genre has immense staying power,” says Elizabeth Lee, editor at Penguin Workshop (and editor of *Lei and the Fire Goddess* by Malia Maunakea). “These types of fantasies are simultaneously original and evergreen—they hold up in any decade, yet always have something new to offer readers. At the same time, I absolutely think there’s room for growth. There are so many perspectives we have yet to hear from, and so many, like Malia’s, where the story is ‘one of the first.’ ”

Geffen aims to continue publishing stories from traditionally underrepresented mythologies and cultures. “I don’t look at this recent trend as a fad or a blip,” he says. “Rather, I think it’s the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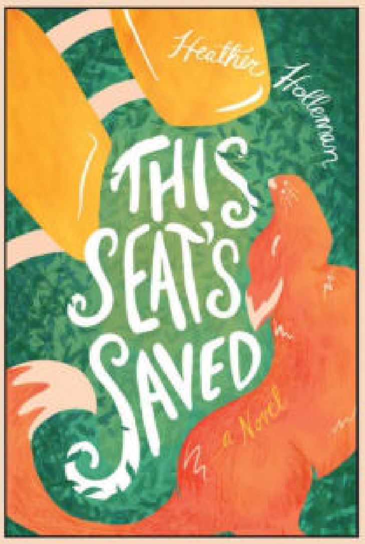
start of a lasting sea change in middle grade fantasy as a whole, and the future is incredibly bright. We still have a ways to go though, and I hope we continue to see the proliferation of these stories in all subgenres of fantasy."

Proliferation will not mean merely more of the same, though, in the view of Alexandra Hightower, senior editor at Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (and editor of *Juniper Harvey and the Vanishing Kingdom* by Nina Varela). "We're already seeing this type of story shape-shift and grow," she says. "There's something undeniably enthralling about a book that can go beyond the boundaries of our world, so I anticipate that these works will continue to appeal as they change. With each passing year, these books offer more complexity around what it means to be a leader, reminding us that leadership doesn't always have to fit one particular mold. From these books, kids can consider what it looks like to try, to succeed, to fail, and to pick yourself up again in a space that is full of fun and ultimately safe."

Alexandra Hightower

Lurie believes there is no shortage of mythology-infused adventure stories to tell. "I don't see us running out of material, because there is an endless supply and variety of inspiration for this kind of book, and there are amazing writers out there," she says. "The key is to avoid watered-down, formulaic stories, which unfortunately can become more prevalent when many publishers jump on the same bandwagon. We have recently expanded into the YA category with Daniel José Older's Outlaw Saints duology, and we have some powerful fiction coming from new voices in 2024. In this way, our list will grow along with our readers." She also cites her company's move to turn a spotlight on Black storytellers via the forthcoming Freedom Fire imprint as another exciting development.

Lurie points to a few concerns about what lies ahead. "I do worry about negative external forces such as book banners trying to erase nonwhite culture, restrictive state guidelines making it impossible for teachers and librarians to buy new books, and large retailers not supporting middle grade fiction as a category," she notes. "But rather than let myself get discouraged or disillusioned in the face of these obstacles, I must continue to swing my sword against the monsters. The kids deserve nothing less."



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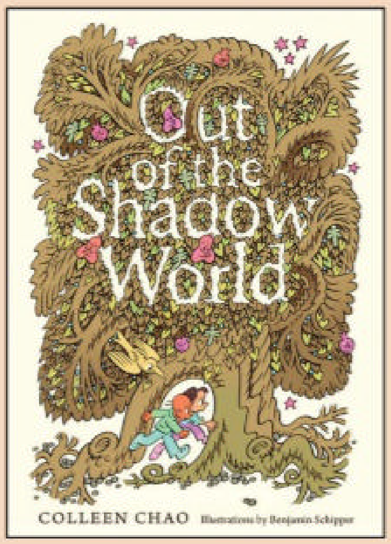

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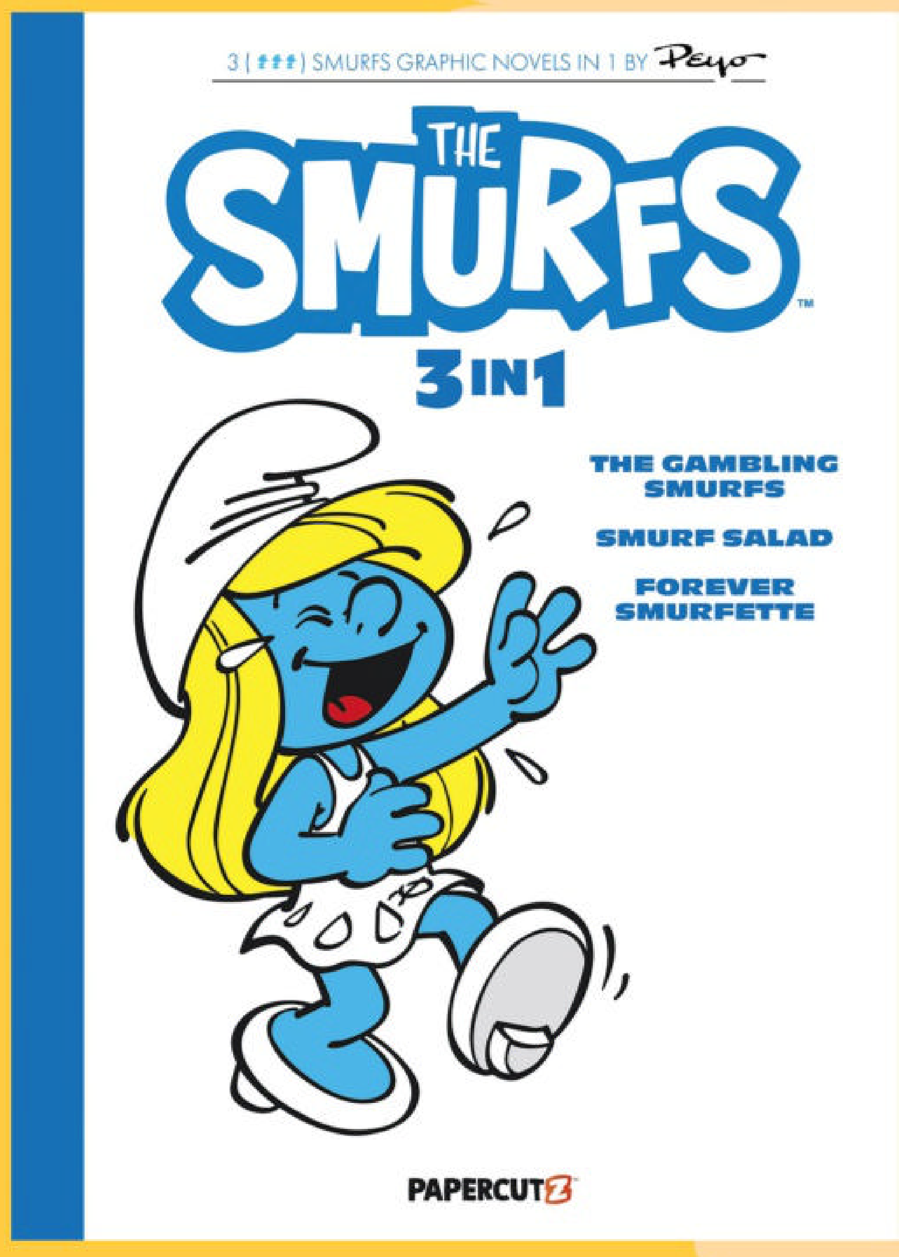
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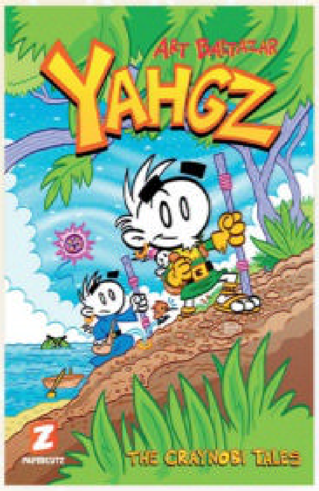
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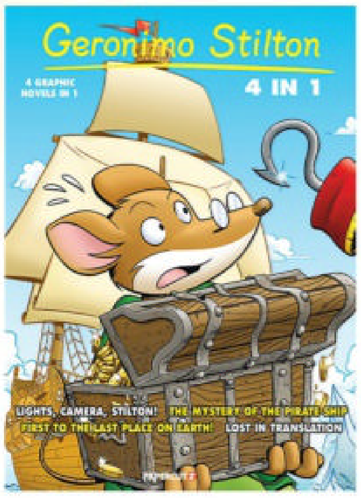
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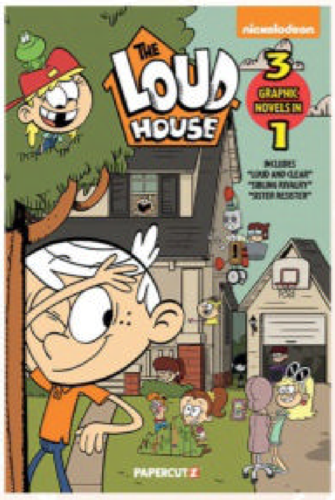
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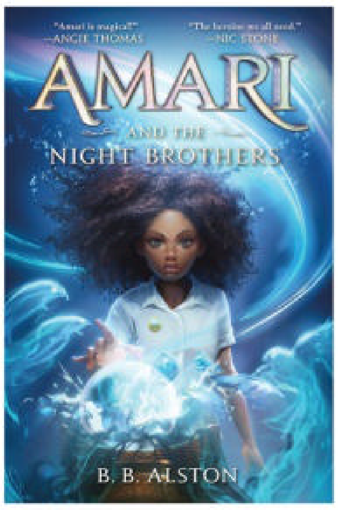
EXPLORING THE BOOKS

In these title close-ups, authors and editors share their thoughts on creating books within the burgeoning middle grade subgenre of mythology-inspired fantasy-adventures. For more extensive commentary on the books, see publishersweekly.com/mg2023booklist.

Compiled by Shannon Maughan

Amari and the Night Brothers #3

B.B. Alston (Balzer + Bray, Oct.)


"Amari is magical!" —ANGIE THOMAS
"The heroine we all need." —NIC STONE
AMARI
AND THE
NIGHT BROTHERS
B. B. ALSTON

Editor Kristin Rens: "What drew me in when I first read it was the way in which it felt like a love letter to classic books and films like the Percy Jackson series and *Men in Black*, while also feeling totally new and fresh. It has all the intricate magical world-building, genuinely surprising twists, and heart that readers want in a fantasy, with the added layer that Amari's challenges in the supernatural world very intentionally mirror those that many kids—especially children of color—face in our real world."

Alston: "The premise for the Amari books is that everything we think of as myths and legends actually exists—just hidden away from the 'known world' we all experience in real life. So, in Amari's world there are bits and pieces of mythologies from around the world, as well as references from pop culture, which sort of represents a modern mythology in many ways. I thought it would be really fun to see how an inner-city kid reacts when experiencing elements that are foreign to her. Amari struggles with who she is and where she's from, and being exposed to a world that is so vast and full of so many distinct characters and settings gives her the courage to accept the things about herself that make her unique."

The Enchanted Life of Valentina Mejía

Alexandra Alessandri (Atheneum, out now)

ALEXANDRA ALESSANDRI
The ENCHANTED LIFE of VALENTINA MEJÍA

Editor Sophia Jimenez: "Alessandri turns mythical creatures into endearing individual characters and describes the landscapes of Colombia so vividly that I felt at home in the world of the novel, despite not having grown up with those particular stories myself."

Alessandri: "Part of what drew me to write this kind of fantasy adventure is the fact that I wish I'd had these books as a child, ones that featured my culture in such an unapologetic manner that didn't repeat the stereotypes surrounding Colombia, and ones that featured Colombian characters having magical adventures like those in the Chronicles of Narnia."

Juniper Harvey and the Vanishing Kingdom

Nina Varela (Little, Brown, out now)

"Heartwarming and hilarious." —KWAME MBALIA
JUNIPER HARVEY AND THE VANISHING KINGDOM
NINA VARELA

Editor Alexandra Hightower: "In *Juniper Harvey and the Vanishing Kingdom*, author Nina Varela leans into a first-person perspective that includes just the right edge of self-deprecation. This vulnerability welcomed me into the messiest parts of Juniper's heart, and this closeness and authenticity allows readers to really feel the way Juniper grows into herself by the end."

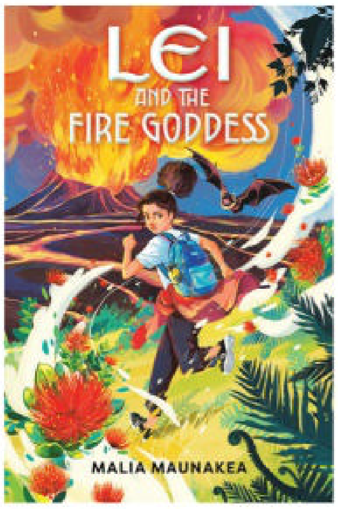
Varela: "Juniper Harvey is inspired by the story of 'Pygmalion the Sculptor,' first recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—a chronicling and reworking of existing myths and legends that had long been floating in the Greco-Roman cultural soup. Mostly I took the story of Pygmalion the woman-hating sculptor—the artist whose beloved creation came to life—and made it about young queers.

I had so much fun with the magic. From one draft to the next I pulled fewer and fewer punches, just going all-out—yes Galatea's island floats in the sky, yes there are fanged flying sheep and toady swamp creatures and lesbian gods. I just wanted it to feel so big and wild.

I hope this book feels like an escape. Especially for queer readers, I want joy and safety, comfort and acceptance for them, as much as they can get, as much as I can give."

Lei and the Fire Goddess

Malia Maunakea (Penguin Workshop, June)

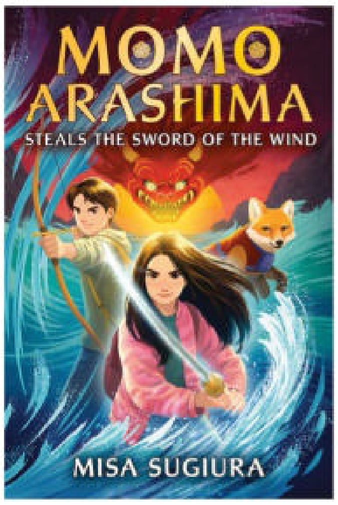


Editor Elizabeth Lee: “This is Malia Maunakea’s debut novel, and actually the first book I acquired at Penguin Workshop. It’s about a part-Hawaiian girl who accidentally angers Pele the fire goddess and must now battle mythical creatures, team up with demigods and talking bats, and evade the traps Pele hurls her way. It’s also about Lei’s insecurities about her hyphenated identity, and subsequently, her middle-school friendships. I won’t spoil the ending, but Lei needs to really dig deep into her Hawaiian roots and embrace all of who she is to save the day. It’s a fast-paced, lush, exciting read—and it’s one of the first middle-grade Hawaiian titles to be published by a major publisher.”

Maunakea: “One of the best parts of writing *Lei and the Fire Goddess* was that it gave me a reason to revisit all the mo’olelo—the myths, legends, and history—that I grew up with in Hawai’i. To remember what I learned from my teachers in Hilo. To fill the story with as much of the flavor of the islands as I possibly could by recalling sounds and smells of the rainforest, by picturing our ‘ohana potlucks, and by attempting to bring the legends that I’ve admired for decades, represented in so many of Herb Kane’s paintings, to life.”

Momo Arashima Steals the Sword of the Wind

Misa Sugiura (Labyrinth Road, out now)



Editor Liesa Abrams: “Momo learns she is half-goddess and must embark on a wild adventure in order to save her mother’s life, as well as to prevent evil spirits from wreaking havoc on our world.”

Sugiura: “I wanted to write something for my sons in their favorite genre that would also serve as a way for them to connect to their Japanese heritage. For starters, I decided to base the book on stories from the Shinto pantheon rather than Buddhist stories because Shinto is a native Japanese religion—as opposed to Buddhism, which arrived in Japan in 538 CE by way of China. But when I looked for models and source material in English, I discovered that there were no modern collections or standalone retellings of Shinto stories (for children or even for adult academics) available in the United States. In fact, the only text I could find was a hundred-year-old translation of the very first written record of those stories from 1,500 years ago! So, what began as a desire to give my sons a connection to my parents’ homeland became a desire to share Shinto stories with the rest of the world.”

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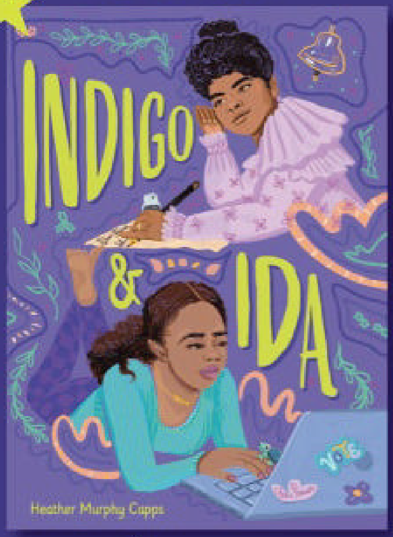

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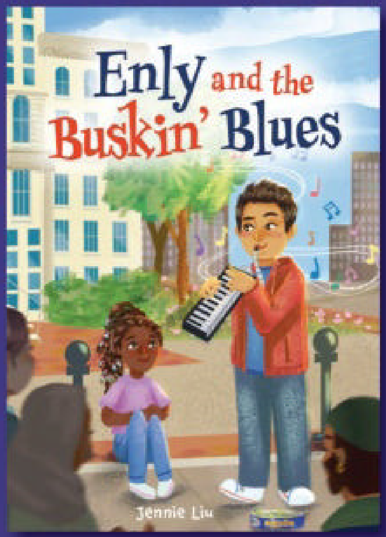
★ Booklist



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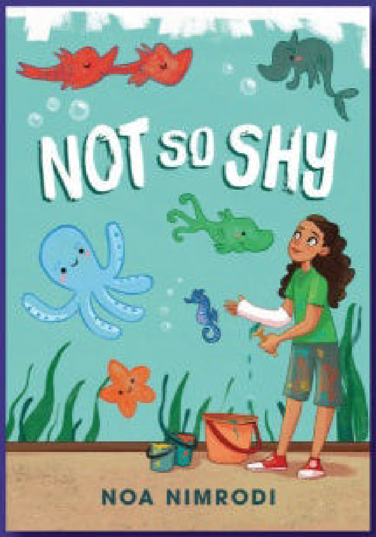

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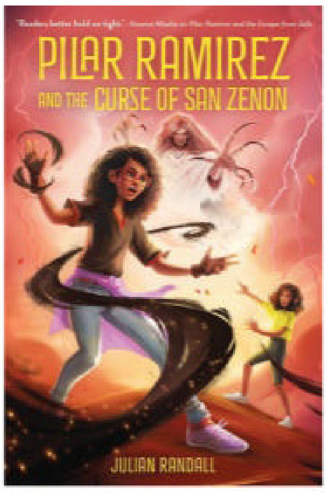
Pilar Ramirez and the Curse of San Zenon

Julian Randall (Holt, out now)

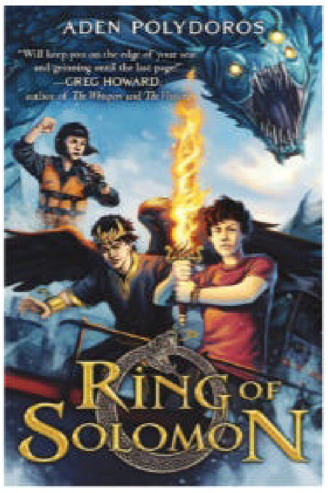


Editor Brian Geffen: "Julian Randall's Pilar Ramirez duology is best pitched as Chris Colfer's The Land of Stories series meets Dominican mythology and culture. The story follows 12-year-old Pilar, who is searching for the story behind her mom's cousin who went missing in the Dominican Republic during the Trujillo dictatorship, and ends up being accidentally transported to a magical island filled with Dominican myths and legends, where the Dominican boogeyman is keeping her cousin captive."

Randall: "When I was eight years old my mom explained the story of how my abuelo had to flee the Dominican Republic because of targeting by Trujillo's secret police, and in my mind this was something that could have only been accomplished with bad magic. Dictatorship is a kind of sorcery; I wanted a book that showed all the other magic that fights back against it. I wanted a Black Dominicana heroine who could shatter a curse like that; I wanted it for 20 years and then along came Pilar."

Ring of Solomon

Aden Polydoros (Inkyard, out now)



Editor Meghan McCullough: "*Ring of Solomon* is lush with Jewish mythology. It centers on Zach, a queer Jewish boy who, at a flea market, stumbles upon a mysterious ring that belonged to King Solomon. Using the ring, and with the help of Ashmedai—in Jewish lore, the King of Demons—Zach must halt apocalyptic chaos as the Behemoth, the Ziz, and the Leviathan descend upon his hometown."

Polydoros: "I adore stories that draw from mythology and folklore, both as a reader and a writer. For me, I knew I wanted to write a Jewish fantasy. With *The City Beautiful* exploring dybbukim, possessive spirits in Jewish folklore, and my forthcoming *Wrath Becomes Her* featuring a golem protagonist, I pondered the idea of writing a novel about shedim. Through my initial research, I read about the fabled ring of Solomon, and from there, the idea took on a life of its own."

The Spirit Glass

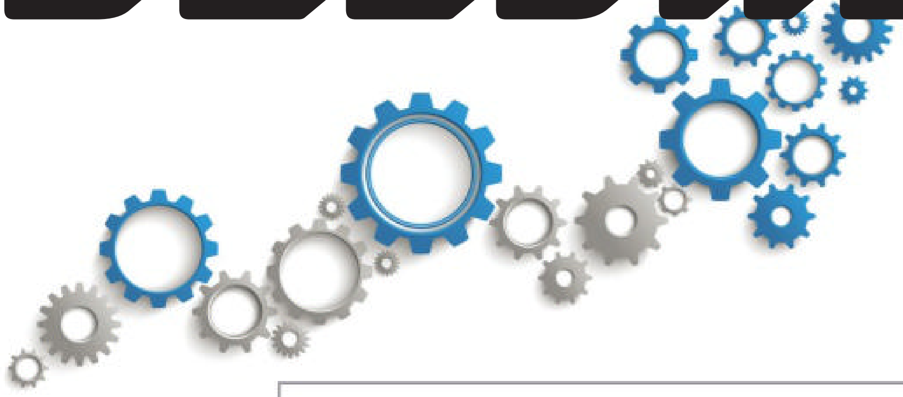
Roshani Chokshi (Rick Riordan Presents, Sept.)

RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS
THE Spirit GLASS
ROSHANI CHOKSHI

Editor Stephanie Owens Lurie: "*The Spirit Glass* is a standalone novel based on Filipino mythology from Roshani Chokshi, author of the bestselling Aru Shah series. It is the story of a girl named Corazon Lopez who wants to be trained in babaylan magic so she can keep her ghost parents with her forever. The book has all the humor and imagination of Aru Shah plus a deeply moving core."

Chokshi: "I've always been drawn to adventures that are vaguely spooky and comically unsettling. I am scared of ghosts, but delighted by the idea of a ghost that refuses to haunt a particular house because it objects to the interior decorating. That's not a story I've written—though someone is welcome to make it their own—but it's this contradictory tension of fear and fun that delights me as a reader and artist. *Spirit Glass* was always intended to explore a world that existed in the shadowy place between life and death. And it was always intended to remove horror from that situation." ■

FAST-GROWING INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS



Publishers used different strategies to maintain, and extend, sales gains in 2022

By Jim Milliot

TokyoPop was founded in Los Angeles in 1997 by Stu Levy and was responsible for introducing manga into the U.S. market. The publisher had a near-death experience in 2011, largely shutting down its U.S. business (it also has a division in Germany). It revived its U.S. operation in 2016 and, after a slow start, began hitting its stride in 2021 and 2022.

Sales in 2022 doubled over 2021, and were up 580% from 2020. "TokyoPop's revived '2.0 version' is growing quickly, and I'm proud of our close-knit, passionate team," Levy says. Sales in 2022 were the highest since the relaunch, and Levy is "looking forward to further expansion."

FAST-GROWING INDIE PUBLISHERS 2020–2022

PUBLISHER	SALES GROWTH	EMPLOYEES		NEW TITLES	
	2022 v. 2020	2020	2022	2020	2022
TokyoPop Los Angeles	580%	5	9	45	61
Forefront Books Nashville	216%	3	7	21	39
Microcosm Publishing Portland, Ore.	152%	18	32	23	41
Media Lab Books New York City	52%	12	20	19	20
Seven Stories New York City	32%	7	9	41	48
Kogan Page New York City	18%	3	5	90	115
Barefoot Books Concord, Mass.	17%	21	31	24	17
Ulysses Press Berkeley, Calif./New York City	9%	13	13	65	69
Milkweed Editions Minneapolis, Minn.	2%	10	14	20	24

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

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PW DAILY

PUBLISHERSWEEKLY.COM/PWD

TokyoPop's revival has been due in part to the overall surge in demand for manga. The boom has led longtime TokyoPop accounts like bookstores, libraries, and comic shops to increase their manga footprint, while allowing the publisher to add some new retailers such as Walmart and Hot Topic, according Marc Visnick, who was promoted to COO and publisher in January in recognition of his work leading TokyoPop's rebound.

Also, on the sales side, TokyoPop has expanded its global retail reach though digital initiatives and has struck up more subscription partnerships. In addition, in January 2021, it moved its trade distribution from Diamond to Independent Publishers Group.

All those new channels have had more, and better, content to sell over the past couple of years. The publisher's new title count, which includes books as well as single-issue comics, rose from 45 in 2020 to 61 last year, as TokyoPop's acquisition team focused on signing, and releasing, titles based on high fan engagement. A big success last year were TokyoPop's Disney manga titles, led by *Marcy's Journal: A Guide to Amphibia* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas.*

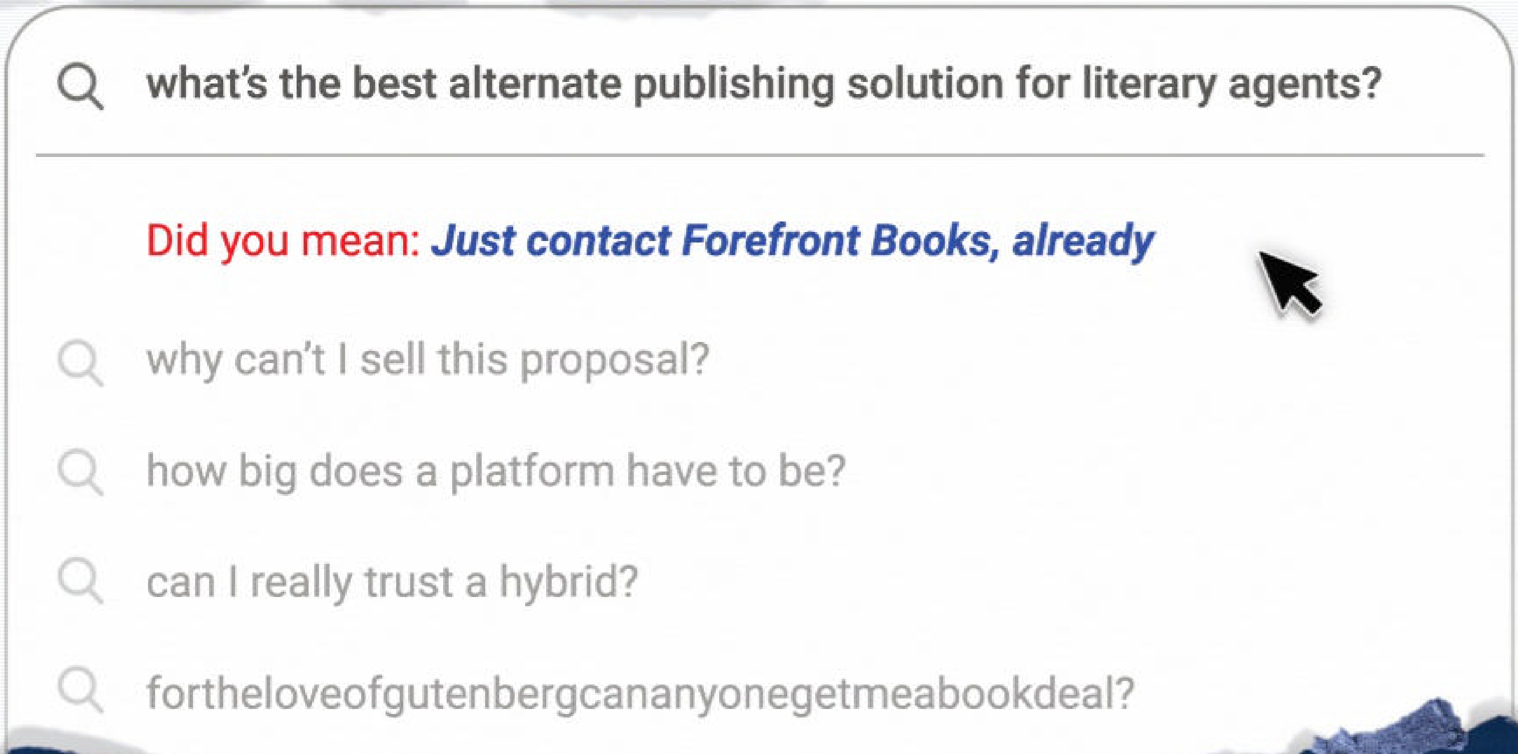
Jonathan Merkh, whose publishing background includes executive roles with Thomas Nelson and Simon & Schuster, started the hybrid publisher Forefront Books in Nashville in 2018. The company began to pick up traction in 2020 and saw solid gains in both 2021 and 2022, leading to a sales increase of 216% in the three-year period.

Merkh sees the steady sales progress as success breeding success, noting that as Forefront's sales grow it has attracted more successful authors, a number of whom had previously been published by larger traditional publishers. Glenn Beck and Joan Lunden are two examples of established personalities and authors who have been published by Forefront. Beck had one of Forefront's biggest hits with *The Great Reset*, selling more than 250,000 copies since its publication in January 2022, according to the publisher, while Lunden's *Why Did I Come into This Room* hit a number of bestseller lists.

"We are seeing more and more interest from successful authors with platforms who are tired of playing games with the big publishers," Merkh says. "Our model provides them more flexibility and control, and a better payout on the back end."

Partnering with key brands has helped Forefront quickly build a backlist. An agreement with Worth Media has resulted in signed deals for nearly 20 titles under the Worth Media imprint. Merkh has also created imprints with leadership

The publishing industry is changing.
Book deals are more difficult than ever.



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guru John Maxwell and launched a Jewish Leadership imprint with entrepreneur Michael Levin. In addition, Forefront started Frederick Douglass Books with the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives Foundation to, Merkh says, "give a voice to Black and brown voices around social justice and human trafficking."

Merkh turned to one of his former employers, S&S, for distribution. "Without them we wouldn't be anywhere near the size we are," he says. "Their sales force has been amazing."

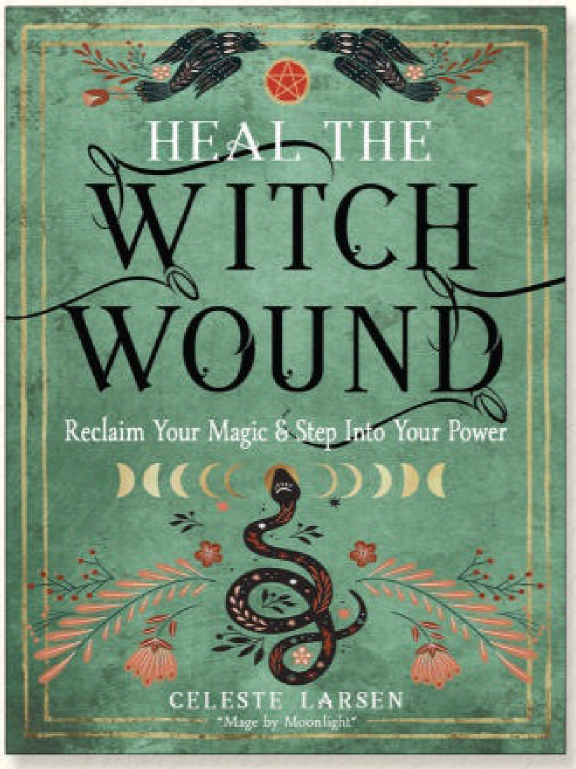
Forefront's success, and changes in the industry, have resulted in the publisher getting more submissions from agents. "When I announced Forefront to agents they wished me luck, but didn't think this would work for their clients because of the advances they were looking for," Merkh explains. "Now, more and more are either finding it difficult to sell midlist authors or just don't like what publishing houses are offering, and they're finding our alternative to be a solution for their authors."

After finishing atop *PW*'s fast-growing independent publisher list last year, Portland, Ore.–based **Microcosm Publishing** had a 22% sales increase in 2022 over 2021, giving it a three-year gain of 152%. Founder Joe Biel is well-known for his pro-indie, anti-Amazon beliefs—*How to Resist Amazon & Why* has been a steady seller for the publisher for several years—and independent retailers continued to be a key to Microcosm's growth in 2022. Microcosm added 2,576 independent retailers last year, bringing the total number of retailers that feature its books to more than 12,000. "This strategy proved once again that the underground is bigger than the 'mainstream,'" Biel says.

Another successful strategy that Biel continues to follow is to sign a subset of books that most other publishers shy away from: debut nonfiction written by unknown authors with no platform. "We focus on value proposition and title development above all else," he explains. With that operating philosophy, it is no surprise that Microcosm has built a successful backlist, with many of 2022's bestsellers repeats from 2021, led by Faith G. Harper's *Unfuck Your Brain*, which once again topped the publisher's bestseller list, selling about three times more copies than the next nine bestselling titles combined. In second place was Friday Gladheart's *The Practical Witch's Almanac*.

Red Wheel/Weiser

Books to Live by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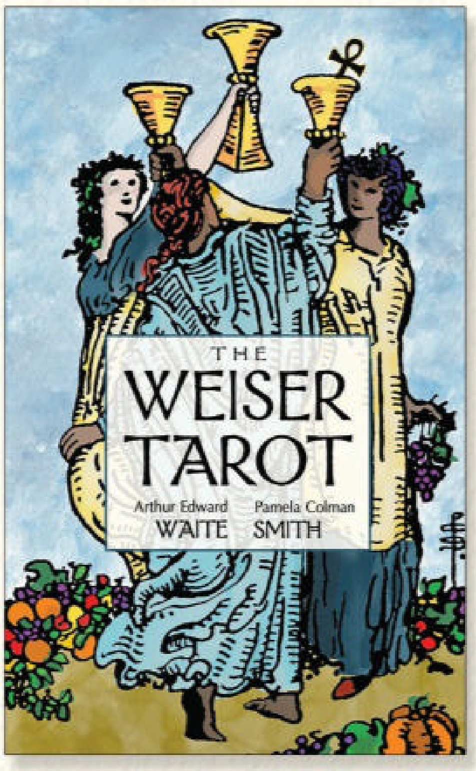
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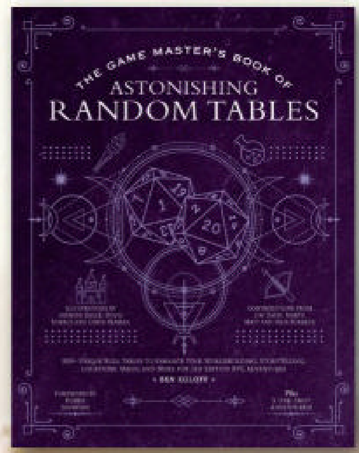

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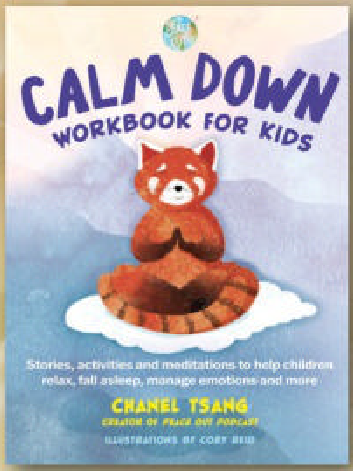
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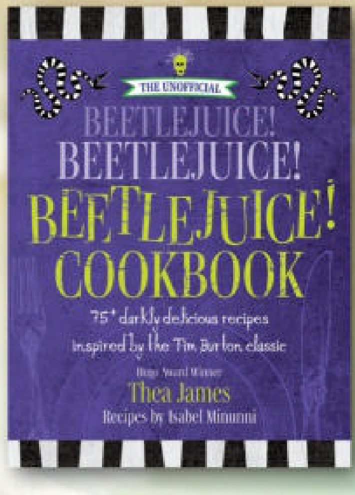
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Underpinning all of Microcosm's operations is its WorkingLit software, which automates virtually every function, making it easier for the publisher to make data-based decisions, Biel explains. He notes that it played a crucial role in helping the company navigate the pandemic successfully. Microcosm began making WorkingLit available to other publishers last year, and Biel says several presses are now using it, with interest growing.

After trimming its title count in 2018 and 2019, New York City's **Media Lab Books** carefully expanded the number of new titles it was publishing annually between 2020 and 2022, in order to "maintain a very high bar for what we choose to publish," says publisher Phil Sexton. MLB has been able to follow that go-slow approach because it has developed a successful backlist built around some key series, including books related to Harry Potter, John Wayne, and tabletop role-playing games, Sexton says. Titles that performed particularly well in 2022 include *The Game Master's Book of Traps, Puzzles and Dungeons*, *The Unofficial Harry Potter Hogwarts Handbook*, and *Tastes Like Schitt: The Unofficial Schitt's Creek Cookbook.*

With a firm foundation in place, MLB is focusing on some new growth areas. Custom sales, translation rights, and special sales all rose over 2021 and combined to account for about 15% of total sales last year, Sexton says, noting that in 2022 MLB increased its number of translation rights deals by 27% over 2021. The consistent frontlist and backlist performance has also enabled MLB to expand its list to 25 titles in 2023, and it plans to publish 36 titles in 2024. In the current year, MLB is expanding its list in new areas, with titles including *Queer Here. Queer There. We're Not Going Anywhere*, created in partnership with *LGBTQ Nation*, and *Self-Love Rainbow Workbook* by social media influencer Dominee Calderon.

New York City–based **Seven Stories Press** had a prosperous year in 2020, as a number of its titles addressed issues brought to the surface by the police murder of George Floyd. Sales fell in 2021, but several events came together in 2022 to boost sales by 65% over 2021, giving the publisher a sales increase of 32% since 2020.

The popularity of French author Annie Ernaux grew in 2022, says publisher Dan Simon, after she was named winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature last fall. The announcement came two days after Seven Stories released her *Getting Lost*, and the award enabled Seven Stories "to reintroduce American readers to all 12 of the books by her that were currently in print," Simon says. Ernaux's success "added a tidal surge to what was already going to be a very strong year."

A major news event in the early summer had already sparked sales for another Seven Stories title. When the Supreme Court decision overruling *Roe v. Wade* was handed down in June, the second edition of Robin Marty's *Handbook for a Post-Roe America* "suddenly became the book of the hour," Simon says. A new book by nonbinary sex educator Cory Silverberg, *You Know, Sex,* which Seven Stories released last spring, also sold well, helped by a *New York Times Magazine* profile of Silverberg. The publicity also stimulated sales for two previous Silverberg titles for younger kids: *What Makes a Baby* and *Sex Is a Funny Word.*

Over the past two years, Seven Stories was able to strengthen its ranks by bringing in Bill Rusin as national sales director and Clare Kelley (who is now marketing director for all channels) as academic marketing director, and adding James Webster to its social media team, giving the company two employees devoted to improving its web presence. "These were crucial steps, because they allowed us to present our books more deeply through all the different sales channels, including to libraries and to bookstores," Simon explains. "We're obviously an editorially driven house, but as publishers we also recognize that in this electronic age there are many new ways to put books in front of people, and it's our job to do that work."

Kogan Page Inc. has enjoyed three years of solid sales since it was established in 2019 in New York City by Kogan Page, the U.K. independent business book publisher, to reach the U.S. and Canadian markets. While the vast majority of its list comes from its parent company, in 2022 it had several bestsellers by American authors, says marketing manager Vanessa Rueda. These include *From Start-up to Grown-up* by executive coach Alisa Cohn, *The Success Factor* by mentoring and leadership development consultant Ruth Gotia, and *Words That Work* by global leadership and innovation expert Val Wright. Revisions of key backlist titles, including the third edition of *Digital Marketing Strategy* and the fourth edition of *Warehouse Management*, also sold well.

The Kogan Page Inc. team was strengthened in the year, Rueda says, by the implementation of a hybrid work model, which allowed for more training of its recently hired acquisitions and marketing personnel. The U.S. business also benefitted from investments made in new technologies by its parent company, which allowed it to place greater emphasis on title metadata to support data-driven booksellers and to use data to help the publisher "take an evidence-based approach to marketing and sales and new product development," Rueda says.

After an 18% sales increase in 2021 over 2020, **Barefoot Books** in Concord, Mass., was able to hang onto most of its gains in 2022, even as online sales declined. The children's book

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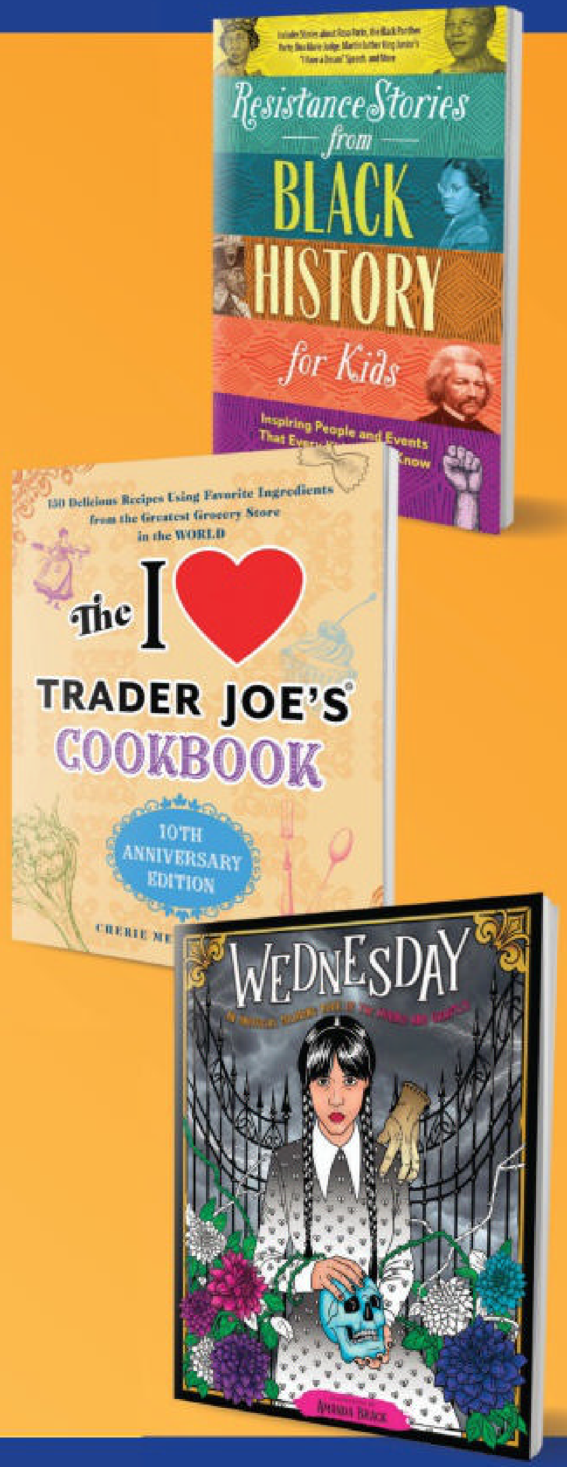
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SPIEGEL & GRAU GETS ROLLING

Cindy Spiegel and Julie Grau formed the independent press Spiegel & Grau in 2020 after Penguin Random House closed their imprint of the same name in 2019. The company didn't publish its first title until 2021, making it ineligible for the fast-growing list, but Spiegel and Grau have made important strides in building their business since 2020. S&G's first title, and its only in 2021, was the critically acclaimed *Fox and I* by Catherine Raven, which has sold more than 60,000 copies across all formats, according to the publisher. The company upped its output to seven print books plus two audiobook originals in 2022, resulting in a 116% jump in sales over 2021. Last year also saw the release of Melody Beattie's *Codependent No More*, the first book in the Melody Beattie library, which S&G sees as an important step in building a backlist. With a staff that now numbers 13, S&G will publish 10 new books this year. Its lead titles are *Go as a River*, the recently published debut novel by Shelley Read; Alice Carrière's debut memoir, *Everything/Nothing/Someone*, set for August; and Margaret Renkl's *The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year*, due in October.

publisher has long employed a multichannel sales approach, and that paid dividends again last year: sales through book and gift indie retailers rose 15% over 2021.

The main driver, says Barefoot marketing and sales associate Lauren Joyner, was the success the company had using the Faire platform, which matches local retailers with brands and products that fit their stores. The retail push is continuing this year, and Barefoot appointed new sales reps across the U.S., signed new sales agreements in Canada, and added Compass as its new trade reps in the U.K. and Europe.

Barefoot's titles are written to both educate and entertain children, making the education market an important channel. Sales to that market were up 55% due to a variety of initiatives. Barefoot worked with Books4School to distribute nearly one million bilingual editions of its early learning and multicultural titles, which were translated into more than 20 languages. A partnership with Books for Africa resulted in a major distribution deal in Madagascar. A new marketing initiative last year was the launch of the Learning Hub section on its website, which offers free resources, activities, and lesson plans that support its books.

Having published about 1,000 titles in its 31-year history, Barefoot is a backlist-driven press, and backlist represented 90% of its sales in 2022, up from 85% in 2021. Bestsellers include its animated sing-along titles, which help build listening and gross motor skills. According to Barefoot, its sing-along videos on YouTube have garnered nearly half a billion views.

Similar to Barefoot, Ulysses Press was able to keep sales above 2020 last year despite a dip from 2021, giving the publisher, with offices in Berkeley, Calif., and Brooklyn, a 9% increase in revenue in 2022 over 2020. A company spokesperson said Ulysses was pleased with its performance last year, in light of the turbulence in the industry.

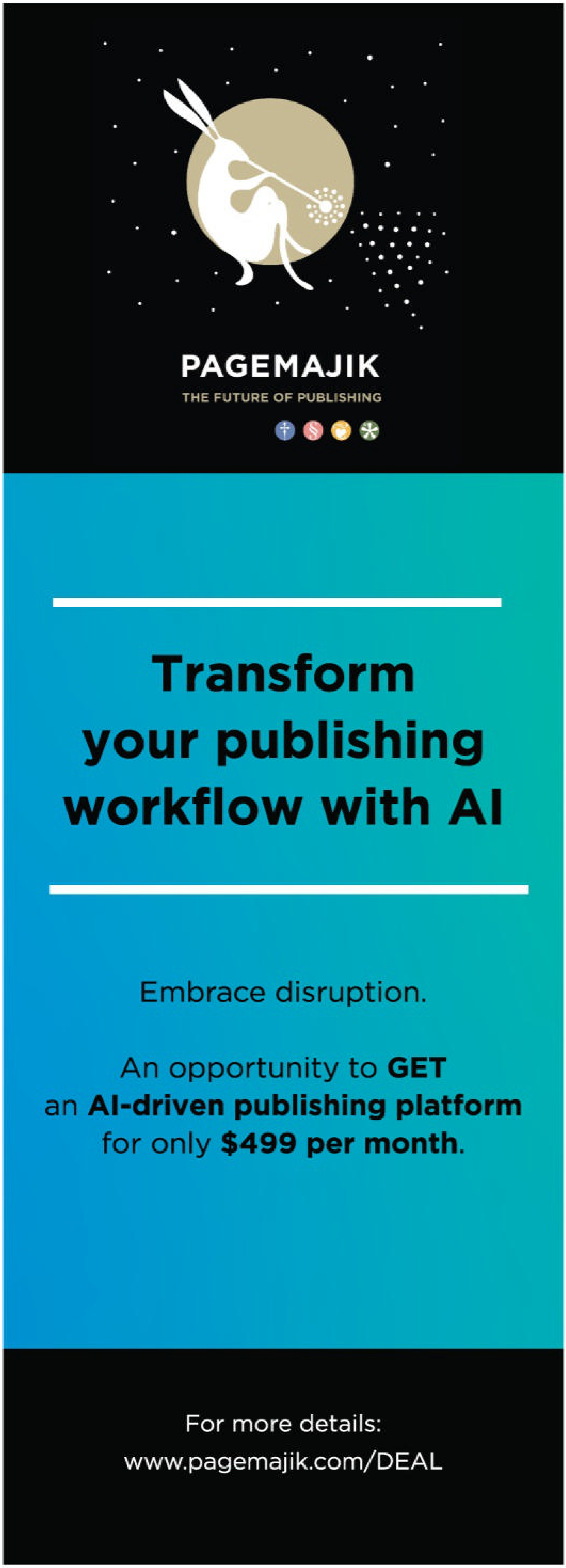
Though backlist continued to generate the majority of Ulysses's revenue—70% in 2022—the press was helped by good responses to several new books in its core categories. Sales were solid for *The Unofficial Studio Ghibli Cookbook* in the pop-culture cooking niche, the officially licensed *Hunt a Killer: The Detective's Puzzle Book* in true crime, and, in self-help, *Taking Stock: A Hospice Doctor's Advice on Financial Independence, Building Wealth, and Living a Regret-Free Life* by Jordan Grumet, host of the *Earn & Invest* podcast.

In 2020, sales at Minneapolis, Minn.–based **Milkweed Editions** jumped 183% over 2019, and while 2022 sales increased only 2% over 2020, the press takes pride in maintaining the "new sales normal," says marketing director Joanna Demkiewicz. The key contributor to that achievement has been the performance of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which was published in paperback in 2015 and landed on the *New York Times* bestseller list on Feb. 9, 2020. Some three years later, the book is still on the list.

Demkiewicz attributes *Braiding Sweetgrass's* long bestseller run to its overarching message: a call "to embrace mutual flourishing and to practice reciprocity" at a time when readers are navigating a range of challenges, including political tumult and environmental collapse. *Braiding Sweetgrass* has sold more than 1.5 million copies in multiple formats to date, according to the publisher.

Milkweed followed the sales jump in 2020 with another solid gain in 2021 thanks largely to the selection of Aimee Nezhukumatathil's illustrated nature book *World of Wonders* as a Barnes & Noble Book of the Year. The press has augmented the *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *World of Wonder* hits by building a strong backlist, which routinely drives its monthly sales. Among those standouts are U.S. poet laureate Ada Limón's poetry collections *The Hurting Kind*, *The Carrying*, and *Bright Dead Things*; *The Seed Keeper* by Indigenous author Diane Wilson; Margaret Renkl's *Late Migrations* and *Graceland, at Last*; and Drew Lanham's *The Home Place*.

"All of these titles are examples of what Milkweed has been doing for decades and what we do best: publishing literary books that explore human relationships to the natural world," Demkiewicz says. "This market is expanding, and Milkweed is leading its growth." ■



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Ivy Pochoda Doesn’t Need

The author of *These Women* writes a female western with no happy ending in sight

By Daniel Lefferts

Ivy Pochoda’s new novel, *Sing Her Down* (MCD, May), began as a dare between herself and a friend at a bar. She wondered if one could write a female version of *Blood Meridian*, Cormac McCarthy’s very bloody, very male western from 1985.

Pochoda had been thinking, she says via Zoom during a visit to New York City (she lives in Los Angeles), about “why we allow men to be violent in books but not women, and *Blood Meridian* is the ur-example of that.”

Could she do it? Could she challenge the conventions of the genre—and flout readers’ expectations for women characters—by telling a story of carnage from a female perspective? She decided she would. And she certainly has.

Sing Her Down centers on three female characters: two newly released ex-convicts, Florida and Dios, and a detective, Lobos, who embarks on a hunt for them after identifying them as suspects in a murder. The book, set mainly in Los Angeles in 2020, may not have the usual trappings of a western—as far as mise-en-scène goes it’s more freeways and gas stations than the “bloodred clouds” and “desert nighthawks” of McCarthy’s epic. But one thing Pochoda realized about the genre as she was preparing to write the book is that it's highly malleable.

More than a time period or location, she says, "the west is an idea—it's a mood." And with its focus on characters taking justice into their own hands, the western is well suited to the present.

"We're seeing a lot of vigilante justice," Pochoda says. She cites as examples the recent surge in gun violence and the proliferation of private militias. "People feel that the government is failing them, or that it's abandoning them. We're seeing western-style justice being carried out—never for better, always for worse."

In *Sing Her Down*, it's definitely for worse. After their release from a women's prison in Arizona, Florida and Dios—ex-cellmates with much bad blood between them—at first go their separate ways. Florida (real name Florence), a rich girl with a penchant for bad crowds and reckless behavior, sets her mind on retrieving her cherished Jaguar from her mother's mansion in Los Angeles and leaving her criminal past behind.

But Dios, a highly educated and darkly philosophical sociopath who calls to mind McCarthy's Judge Holden, believes that Florida is as much a natural-born criminal as she is. She feels that, with enough convincing, Florida will come to see the beauty in her evil, and over the course of the novel she stalks Florida with this eventual conversion in mind. "Stop lying to yourself," Dios tells Florida. "You're not rehabilitated. You don't want to be."

Even Lobos, a committed upholder of the law, harbors fantasies of violence and extrajudicial score settling. She's reeling from a failed marriage that culminated in a violent attack by her ex-husband, and as she searches for Florida and Dios she finds herself tapping into her own reservoir of fury. "She's trained to pretend she doesn't understand the hatred, couldn't possibly identify with the lawless rage that comes across her desk," Pochoda writes of Lobos. "But she does."

Redemption

Sing Her Down is Pochoda's third novel set in Los Angeles, after *These Women* and *Wonder Valley*. All three deal with life on the city's margins—on Skid Row, in its encampments, among its misfits and drifters.

A native of Brooklyn, Pochoda moved to Los Angeles in 2009 with her then husband, who worked in TV. "I had no connection to the city whatsoever," she says. "I felt really uncomfortable writing about L.A., which is why I think I write about outsider versions of the city."

Pochoda already knew a good deal about being an outsider. She spent much of her youth playing squash, first in Brooklyn and later at Harvard, where in 1998 she won the title of individual national champion. She went on to play professionally for several years after college. She loved the sport and still plays regularly, but she's never felt at home in the buttoned-up squash community. In a 2013 *New York Times* essay, she wrote about the culture shock she experienced when she, the daughter of "committed leftists," entered the world of Brooklyn's Heights Casino squash club, where women wore elephant pins to signal their political affiliation and spectators were discouraged from cheering.

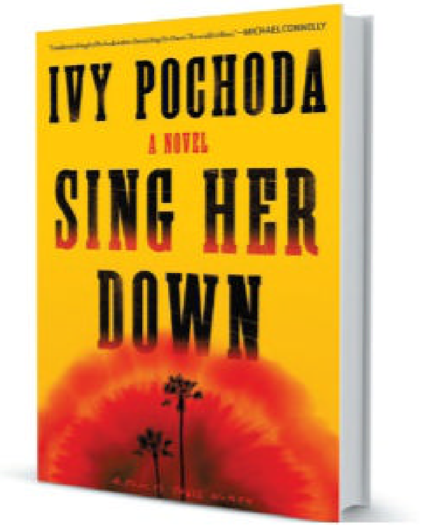
© MARIA KANEVSKAYA

"I've always felt different from most of the people who play squash," Pochoda says. "I'm a little more outspoken. They think I'm a punk, or a hippie, or something."

Pochoda's time as a squash player was isolating, but it was good training for writing—as isolating a profession as there can possibly be—and it helped her find her subject matter and perspective. Her characters, she says, are "often lonely and alienated and by themselves."

They also do not arrive at happy endings, and that is very much to Pochoda's point. In keeping with her interest in the western genre, in allowing women to be as violent and unrepentant as men, she affords her characters little in the way of redemption. The novel is dark from start to finish.

"I read way too many books where it's very violent and then there's a beautiful scene at the end where there's a possibility for a new world," Pochoda says. "And I'm like—I mean, maybe! But that doesn't seem to serve the story you just told. Follow your characters where they're going to lead you. They can be super-violent and awful but there can also be beauty within that."



Pochoda finds that writers often hasten to justify a woman's violence with exonerating explanations. "She was raped, or she had an abusive childhood, or someone stole her child, or it's Thelma and Louise and her husband's an asshole," she says. "It's a kind of perversion. People want to read about violent women up to a point, and then they need that violence to be excused."

Pochoda herself fell prey to this instinct while writing the book, adding in exculpatory backstories for her characters that she later cut. "I was like, 'No, no, no, don't do that!'" she says. "It doesn't matter. They're just allowed to do these things. It can just be in their nature."

In all her novels, Pochoda likes to zero in on a turning point that decides a character's trajectory. For Florida, it's the pivotal second when she opts to commit the crime that lands her in prison (suffice it to say it involves a lit match). After that, her fate is sealed: no pardons, no reformations, no bright tomorrows await.

"There's a moment when your life either stays on course or goes off course," Pochoda says. "If you can pinpoint that moment, that's enough redemption for me, because it shows there was a possibility that you could have been otherwise." ■

Daniel Lefferts is a writer living in New York's Hudson Valley. His debut novel, Ways and Means, *is forthcoming from Overlook Press in early 2024.*

Reviews

Fiction

Blue Skies

T.C. Boyle. Liveright, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-1-324-09302-2

Boyle's spirited latest (after the collection *I Walk Between the Raindrops*) follows an extended family through a series of ecological disasters. In Beach Haven, Fla., an aspiring influencer named Cat impulse-buys a Burmese python, dreaming of racking up views on social media. Her fiancé, Todd, a Bacardí brand ambassador, is less enthusiastic. Back in Santa Barbara, Calif., Cat's mother, Ottilie, adds insect protein to her diet to appease her entomologist son, Cooper, an outspoken climate fatalist. Soon, disaster strikes: Cooper contracts a nasty infection that changes his life, and Cat and Todd's California wedding is thwarted by wind and wildfires. Later, torrential rains and flooding in coastal Florida prevent Todd from returning from a business trip and a pregnant Cat goes into labor alone; Ottilie, arriving for the birth, is forced to commandeer a rowboat. Meanwhile, a massive global insect die-off has Cooper sifting through bug carcasses in triple digit temperatures in California's Santa Ynez Valley, and as the weather gets worse, no one emerges unscathed. Boyle remains a vibrant stylist, with fondness for his complex characters and a knack for zany details (Ottilie's dinners with her physician husband include fried grasshoppers and mescal-worm tacos). Equal parts entertaining and anxiety inducing, this dazzles. *Agent: Georges Borchardt, Georges Borchardt Inc. (May)*

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T.C. Boyle returns with Blue Skies, *an exciting and witty family story involving catastrophic weather (reviewed on this page).*

Glassworks

Olivia Wolfgang-Smith. Bloomsbury, $28.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-63557-877-5

Wolfgang-Smith contends with vocation, identity, and the meaning of family in her appealing debut. The first of four sections takes place in 1910 Boston, where heiress Agnes Carter marries an unscrupulous and abusive man and becomes enamored of a brilliant but volatile sculptor named Ignace Novak, whom she's hired to produce glass models of flora and fauna. In 1938, Agnes's son, Edward, longs to pursue a religious career, but lacks the required theological background, then stumbles into a career making liturgical stained glass. In the 1980s, Edward's gender fluid offspring, Novak, works as a window cleaner in New York City. After Novak is dragged reluctantly to a Broadway performance, Novak becomes besotted with Cecily, a captivating, gender-bending swing performer. The novel's final section, set in 2015, focuses on Cecily's daughter, known as "Flip," who lives miserably in the closet-size spare room of her ex-girlfriend's apartment because she can't afford to move out. Flip works at a start-up that creates glass paperweights out of cremains, where a co-worker encourages her to look into her mysterious given name—Novak—and the glass bee heirloom she once thought was just a trinket. As the various threads tie together, the author makes clever use of her central metaphor, considering glass as sharp, fluid, changeable, and even surprising—much like the characters she depicts. This is a radiant exploration of a complex legacy. *Agent: Danielle Bukowski, Sterling Lord Literistic. (May)*

Retrospective

Juan Gabriel Vásquez, trans. from the Spanish by Anne McLean. Riverhead, $30 (448p) ISBN 978-0-593-53961-3

Vásquez (*The Shape of the Ruins*) delivers a dramatic if bloated epic based on the lives of Colombian filmmaker Sergio Cabrera and his father, Fausto, an actor turned revolutionary. Days before a Catalonian retrospective honoring Sergio's films in 2016, Sergio learns of Fausto's death in Colombia. Sergio opts to stay in Spain rather than attend the funeral, and the novel travels back and forth in time, recounting the history of the Cabreras and tracking Sergio throughout the festival. Fausto, transplanted to Latin America during the Spanish Civil War, has two children in Bogotá with his wife, Luz Elena, and works as a performer and director on early Colombian television. Fausto and Luz both support FARC, the nation's revolutionary movement, and in 1961 they move the family to Maoist China, where Sergio and his sister, Marianella, join the Red Guard as children. In their late teens, the children return to Colombia to become guerrillas. Back in 2016, Sergio watches his films with his teenage son, Raúl, and tells him stories of their exploits. The narrative has its share of exciting moments amid Colombia's historical turmoil, yet Vásquez's intense attention to detail and frequent historical asides tend to bog things down. It's as frustrating as it is fascinating. *Agent: Maria Lynch, Casanovas & Lynch Literary Agency. (May)*

A History of Burning

Janika Oza. Grand Central, $29 (400p) ISBN 978-1-5387-2424-8

Oza's impressive debut spans four continents and five generations of an Indian family as they're forced to migrate again and again for political and economic reasons. In 1898, 13-year-old Pirbhai, the oldest son of a poor family in western India, heads out to find work. He's conscripted to a railroad builder in Kenya, where he labors for several years. After the project is finished, he lucks into a job at a store run by an Indian family and later marries their eldest daughter, Sonal. The couple then moves to Uganda to work at a pharmacy. In 1972, Pirbhai's son Vinod and his wife and three daughters, who have sunk roots into Uganda, are exiled by Idi Amin, with most of the family moving to Toronto, before their lives are disrupted again by the 1992 racial uprising. In chapters alternating between the many characters' points of view, Oza builds momentum toward a denouement involving a letter from Vinod's lost daughter in Uganda. Though the format doesn't allow for much character development, Oza neatly sets her characters' lives within the context of broader political and economic movements, showing how historical circumstances determine their individual destinies as much as the choices of their forebears. Though it can be tiring, this broad and colorful portrait has plenty of impressive moments. *Agent: Sarah Bowlin, Aevitas Creative Management. (May)*

Big Gay Wedding

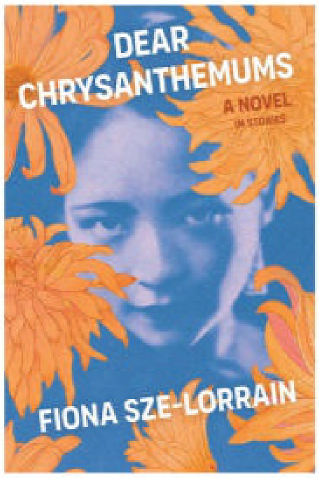
Byron Lane. Holt, $26.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-26714-6

Lane (*A Star Is Bored*) channels rom-com zaniness in his frothy if uneven latest. Chrissy Durang, recently widowed, hopes her 24-year-old son, Barnett, will leave his MRI technician job in Los Angeles to move back and take over her animal rescue farm in rural Louisiana. Instead, Barnett reveals he's engaged to the flamboyant and woo-woo Ezra Tanner. Though Chrissy has long known Barnett is gay, she balks at the news and is hostile when Ezra arrives to meet her. Her emotions ramp up even more when Ezra's parents, domineering socialite Victoria and taciturn Winston, invite themselves to the farm. Egged on by Ezra's flighty twin sister, who has ambitious ideas for a farm wedding, the men make hasty preparations. They have fun brainstorming for a while, until their presence sparks outrage and hateful vandalism from locals. Then Chrissy, in an underdeveloped turn, shucks off her Catholic-influenced hesitancy and goes full bore into the planning. Lane's broad humor moves fast, with occasional winning lines, but most of the players read like caricatures and the more serious moments fall flat. While diverting, it feels a bit aimless. *(May)*

Dear Chrysanthemums

Fiona Sze-Lorrain. Scribner, $18 trade paper (160p) ISBN 978-1-66801-298-7

In Sze-Lorrain's graceful debut collection, women negotiate the violence of pivotal events in Chinese history. "Death at the Wukang Mansion" takes place in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution, when an accomplished ballerina is banished to a mansion and watches the same coffin entering and leaving the building with a different body each day. In "Cooking for Madame Chiang," a former servant of Madame Chiang Kai-shek works in the nationalist leader's household in 1946. Sze-Lorrain picks up with the narrator years later, in "Green," dealing with the suspicion for her role in "the old aristocratic society." In "The Invisible Window," set in 2016, three Chinese women meet in a Paris cathedral to reminisce about their involvement in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, while the title story traces the rise and fall of a famous guzheng player during Mao Zedong's reign. Sze-Lorrain effortlessly evokes the spirit of each setting, be it the ardent fervor of nationalism during the Chinese Civil War or the seedy glamor of a dive bar in Paris, and she imbues her characters with haunting melancholy as victims "doomed to the mishaps of verity and the equally hurtful edges of fiction." This author is one to watch. *(May)*



The Lost Journals of Sacajewea

Debra Magpie Earline. Milkweed, $25 (264p) ISBN 978-1-57131-145-0

Earline (*Perma Red*) reimagines the story of Sacajewea in this powerful outing. Sacajewea is raised among the Lemhi Shoshone by loving parents around the turn of the 19th century, and she learns about the natural world from her elders. She looks forward to marriage with the warrior Blue Elk until raiders descend on her village, identified by Sacajewea only as "Enemies." They murder her parents and kidnap her, and she is forced to marry Charbonneau, a French Canadian trapper. Though she's repeatedly raped by her husband, Sacajewea writes of the solace and hope she finds with other Native women. Still, her nightmare continues with the arrival of Lewis and Clark. As Charbonneau's property, Sacajewea must travel with the explorers, carrying her unwanted newborn son. Along the way, Lewis and Clark trample burial grounds, senselessly kill animals, and steal from people, prompting Sacajewea to reflect, "I tire of… white men's stingy-gut ways to own all things and keep all things to their selves." Earline adds a much-needed Native woman's perspective to Sacajewea's story, bringing a note of resilience to her unflinching account of the white men's violence and depredation: "Women do not become their Enemy captors. We survive them." This is a beautiful reclamation. *(May)*

The Ballad of Lord Edward and Citizen Small

Neil Jordan. Pegasus, $26.95 (348p) ISBN 978-1-63936-453-4

Irish film director Jordan (*Night in Tunisia*) offers a gripping ballad of 18th-century revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic. At its core is the unlikely friendship between two historical figures:

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Tony Small, an illiterate man born into slavery in South Carolina, and British soldier Lord Edward FitzGerald. The two meet when Small discovers FitzGerald wounded at Eutaw Springs during the American Revolutionary War. First, Small tries to hand FitzGerald over to the Continentals in Charleston, but the two are intercepted by the British. Lieutenant Lord FitzGerald then becomes Small's savior, adopting him as his manservant. Small accompanies FitzGerald back across the Atlantic, and in Dublin, FitzGerald plays a leading if ill-fated role within the United Irishmen. FitzGerald is a well-known historical figure, while not much is known about Small; Jordan's choice to portray the events from Small's point of view yields intriguing insights on the nuances of friendship and cogent reflections on 18th-century life ("I was learning about the odd contradiction between servant and master," Small narrates. "How the lines between them can blur into oblivion"). Small also claims the best line of the book: "So revolutions, I supposed, were good for some and not so good for others." This fast-paced epic will have readers hooked. *(May)*

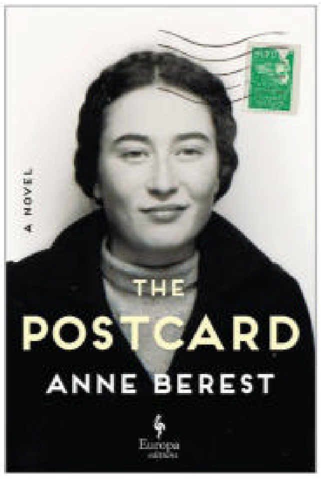
Did You Hear About Kitty Karr?

Crystal Smith Paul. Holt, $27.99 (416p) ISBN 978-1-250-81530-9

In Paul's appealing if overlong debut, a Black Hollywood family reckons with a surprising and complicated past. The St. Johns live in a Bel Air mansion that features a garden maze and a Ferris wheel. Elise is the family's latest star of the silver screen and up for an Academy Award for Best Actress. Her mother, Sarah, is also a storied actor, while her father, James is a renowned musician. Elise is preoccupied with managing her image and avoiding the paparazzi, until the death of neighbor Kitty Karr, Elise's beloved mentor, who leaves a fortune to Elise and her two sisters. As Elsie goes through Kitty's journals, the narrative winds back to Kitty's hardships in 1930s North Carolina and mid-century Hollywood glamour, and Elise learns that while Kitty passed as white, she was actually a light-skinned Black woman. Paul crowds the narrative with far too many underdeveloped characters and makes a few too many implausible plot leaps, but she ably describes Kitty's transformation and unflinchingly details the racism, misogyny, and exploitation Kitty faced as a young woman. Though a bit clunky, the dramatic story and hefty subject matter would make a fine adaptation to the silver screen. *(May)*

★ The Postcard

Anne Berest, trans. from the French by Tina Kover. Europa, $28 (464p) ISBN 978-1-60945-838-6



In Berest's phenomenal English-language debut novel (after the nonfiction work *How to Be Parisian Wherever You Are*), the author pieces together stories of her ancestors who were lost at Auschwitz. In 2003, when Anne is 24, her mother, Lélia, receives a cryptic postcard containing only the names of four relatives, all of whom died in the Holocaust. The postcard remains an enigma until 10 years later, when Anne, now pregnant and visiting her parents' house, decides she's ready to learn more about her roots. In flashbacks sparked by Lélia's stories, Berest builds a touching account of her great-grandparents Emma and Ephraïm Rabinovitz, whose names were on the postcard along with two of their children, and who had fled from four countries before settling in a Paris suburb in 1929. After France is invaded, Ephraïm's business is seized by the government along with his cookware patents, and the family is subjected to curfews and restrictions. Emma and Ephraïm are separated from two of their children, and the four are eventually taken to Auschwitz. With bracing prose, smoothly translated by Kover, Berest takes an unflinching look at antisemitism past and present ("And, I realized now, I was the same age as my mother and grandmother were when they were hit with the insults, the stones.... The pattern was undeniable"). The more Anne learns of her family, the more powerful her story of reclaiming her ancestry becomes. This is brilliant. *(May)*

The Enlightenment of Katzuo Nakamatsu

Augusto Higa Oshiro, trans. from Spanish by Jennifer Shyue. Archipelago, $18 trade paper (150p) ISBN 978-1-953861-52-8

Peruvian writer Oshiro explores issues of grief, ethnic identity, and aging in his feverish English-language debut. While walking through a park in Lima, professor Katzuo Nakamatsu, 58, is overcome by the sensation that he's dead. Despite recognizing the insanity of this feeling, he can't shake it, and he descends into a state of perpetual listlessness. Is it an omen or a self-fulfilling prophecy when he returns to campus and is abruptly laid off because of his age? A long period of aimlessness and self-reflection follows. He traces a large part of his alienation to his identity as the son of Japanese immigrants, reminding himself that "the Japanese weren't wanted anywhere... nobody opened their arms." The prose itself is dreamlike, with long complex sentences evoking a lush garden, the bustle of a college campus, or the dangerous streets of Lima's seedy district, as Katzuo searches for his former self and lingers on memories of his wife, who died years earlier from cancer. Even when Katzuo is admitted to a psychiatric hospital, there's a peaceful lyricism to the storytelling. Also moving is the solace Katzuo finds in the work of Martín Adán, his literary idol, whose wandering "reached the other side of human wretchedness." Oshiro, too, touches the reader's soul. *(May)*

The Great American Everything

Scott Gloden. Hub City, $16.95 trade paper (180p) ISBN 979-8-88574-012-8

Gloden examines the porous boundaries of caregiving relationships in this witty collection. In "The Birds of Basra," an unnamed narrator provides in-home care for an elderly woman named Marta Fontaine, despite disapproval from the narrator's girlfriend, Telly, who claims the service the narrator works for is exploitive. But when Telly insists they continue living together in a tiny apartment and Marta's funds dry up, the narrator realizes her bond with Marta might go deeper than a paycheck. "What Is Louder" revolves around conversations between brothers Rob and Tom, a soldier and a postal worker, about bomb threats at the post office. Rob points out that bombs look less like they do on television than "something you store in the garage," but Tom has an instinct for detecting them. After the bomb squad takes one away, his coworker responds with some colorful dialogue: "Well, Jesus-motherfuck-me. It's a good thing these guys have all day to dress up like goddamn Robocops." In the title story, the narrator travels from Tennessee to New Mexico with his younger brother, Manny, after Manny convinces him there's a mystery for them to solve together related to their grandfather's recent death. Gloden enlivens the everyday situations with insightful social commentary and memorable voices. As slice-of-life stories go, these stand out. *(May)*

Afterword

Nina Schuyler. Clash, $19.95 trade paper (228p) ISBN 978-1-955904-70-4

A woman wrestles with grief and the moral implications of her artificial intelligence program in the appealing latest from Schuyler (*The Translator*). Virginia Samson, a 75-year-old AI innovator, has created a program called Haru, which is named after and mimics her late husband's voice and personality. After a Chinese company uses Haru in its virtual companion app for lonely elderly people, a civil rights lawyer accuses Virginia of colluding with the Chinese government to spy on its citizens. Virginia's attempts to defuse the situation fail, prompting her to rebuild Haru, and her grief over her husband's death is dredged up as she sifts through the various materials and memories that formed the initial neural network. But when she discovers a file on her husband's time in the Japanese army during WWII and his work as a codebreaker, she realizes she might not have known him as well as she thought, and reconsiders her project. Though the tech and surveillance elements feel undercooked, there's plenty of great character work. In flashbacks, Schuyler makes palpable the love between Haru and Virginia, which informs Virginia's conflicted desire to keep his memory alive and leads to many clever insights ("The definition of human should include the world 'flaw' in it"). This will move readers. *(May)*

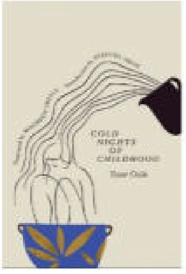
INNER WEATHER

In these experimental voice-driven novels, turbulent narrators try to make sense of their fractured lives.

★ Cold Nights of Childhood

Terzer Özlü, trans. from the Turkish by Maureen Freely. Transit, $16.95 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-1-945492-69-3

In Özlü's posthumous English-language debut, a young woman describes her 1950s childhood and her treatment for mental illness in her 20s. "All I ever wanted was to be free to think and act beyond the tedious limits set by the petit bourgeoisie," says the narrator. Indeed, her account defies many narrative conventions, especially the flow of time and memory. Years pass in mere sentences, hurtling through scenes at a brisk pace. Through details of her experiences—especially the sexual abuse by clinicians—the reader gains a picture of madness as a by-product of various repressive social norms. After marrying a man who tries to control her behavior, the narrator reflects on the binds of marriage: "Why can't we find our way out of all this?... From earliest childhood, they stop us from being ourselves." The edition includes a magnificent introduction from Ayşegül Savaş, who puts Özlü (1943–1986) in a lineage with Italo Svevo and Franz Kafka and praises her frank approach to sexuality as "neither sensational nor metaphorical." Freely's keen translation ought to interest readers in this significant avant-garde writer. *(May)*



Shy

Max Porter. Graywolf, $25 (136p) ISBN 978-1-64445-229-5

Porter (*Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*) dispatches a slender burst of Joycean prose detailing the fragmented psyche of a troubled teenage boy in 1995 England. Expelled from two schools, Shy is poised between the mess he's made of his past and his uncertain future. The reader meets him as he's escaping from Last Chance, the institution to which he's been consigned by his worried mother and archnemesis of a stepfather, with only his techno mixtape for comfort. What ensues is a frantic collage of memories, regrets, dreams, and an inner monologue that emerges piecemeal until Shy surfaces as a pure if disturbed soul caught in desperate circumstances. His lowlife friends have nearly abandoned him and his well-meaning teachers are not to be trusted. Shy may tell himself, "There's more to life than drum n bass. There's more to life than getting wasted," but it will take a drugged-out encounter with his personal demons before he can begin to reckon with what shape that life may take. There's an arresting quality to the narrative's frantic breaths of prose poetry and brief, fractured form. As an experiment in character seen from the inside out, it stands as a singular shoutout to lost boys everywhere. *(May)*

SHY
a novel
max porter

The Bird that Sang in Color

Grace Mattioli. Grace Mattioli, $2.99 e-book (356p) ASIN B08GS2D3ZB

Mattioli (*The Brightness Index*) unfurls a moving story of two Italian American siblings across several decades. It's 1970 in New Jersey, and teenager Vincent Tucci is into astral projection and other trappings of the hippie era. His younger sister Donna watches as their traditional and emotionally abusive father, Cosimo, belittles Vincent and chases him out of the house with a steak knife. Vincent later attends college, where he studies philosophy in a quest to understand Aristotle's view of happiness, and eventually moves back home and settles into blue-collar jobs. Donna, in contrast, has her life planned out: major in English, become a college professor, marry a rich man (because her father said teaching in college wouldn't pay much), and live in a nice house "with trees that turn orange in the fall and flower pink in the spring." By 1980, she's engaged and feels a little guilty about moving on while Vincent hangs around at home. Looking back in 2012, with all her early dreams fulfilled, she feels a lingering unease and realizes Vincent "was happy without all those things, and the big irony was that I had all those things, but I was unhappy." The author traces the Tucci family dynamics with graceful prose. This poignant character-driven story is worth a look. *(Self-published)*

Poetry

Negative Money

Lillian-Yvonne Bertram. Soft Skull, $13.99 trade paper (112p) ISBN 978-1-59376-753-2

Bertram (*Travesty Generator*) blends irreverence, honesty, and formal play in poems that bear witness to the precarity of living on the margins of society. One poem begins, "My eyes are now wide open/ to our moment's desperate light," speaking to Bertram's greater project of leaving the reader with an increased awareness of the fragility, absurdity, and loneliness of the world. Bertram's writing is filled with moments of blunt reckoning, as in one poem that offers the brief but echoing recognition that "America is expensive." In another, they write: "It's tricky work saving white people from themselves." Throughout, the understanding that "we are poor in every corner/ of the world" challenges and complicates the role of language as it dissects a collective reality through individual experience. "The other side of the future world," Bertram warns, "is/ just another future this." This profound book will stir readers into necessary reflection. *(June)*

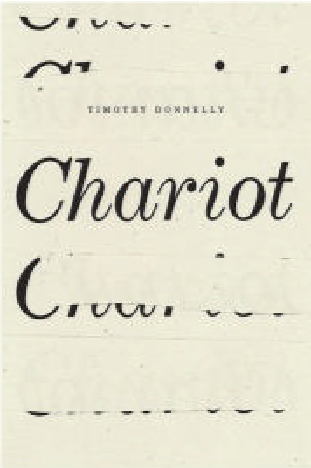
Apocrifa

Amber Flame. Red Hen, $16.95 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-63628-063-9

The expansive and formally inventive second collection from Flame (*Ordinary Cruelty*) considers the cornerstones of romance—doubt, surrender, grief, resolution—through poems about hunger, exploration, and forbidden fruit. Though some of these tropes feel hard-pressed, their execution in individual poems is dynamic and effervescent: "you, fallen/ for the roadmaps/ of my skin.// i seek/ adventure/ in your hair's/ tangled vines.// mouth nomad;/ you, oasis pooling// sinking with every rise." The strength of this collection lies in the structural ingenuity of its poems; Flame uses poetic license to preface each with translated definitions of love-adjacent words from dozens of languages. Her source languages span the globe and time itself, from Inuit, Tshiluba, and Urdu to the extinct Latin and Yagan. The varied forms here, from sonnets, epistles, sestinas, and cinquains, allow for dual interpretations and narrative fluidity. These entries need to be consumed slowly to be best appreciated. *(May)*

Chariot

Timothy Donnelly. Wave, $18 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-950268-77-1



Donnelly (*The Problem of Many*) refines and clarifies his long-lined style into a litany of 20-lined poems that wonder at life, its meaning, and its absurdity in this ruminative fourth collection. Toggling between the philosophical, mundane, and familiar, Donnelly changes registers between lyrical, even academic tones ("syllable by syllable I make the mistake of displacing"), and colloquial ones ("Actually I think I already get this on a gut level"). The energy created by this tension is pleasurable to read; one gets the sense that Donnelly is at once curious, observant, and deeply smart. In poems filled with "Volkswagens,/ Christmas trees, and the leather couches of suburbia" and rife with tangential corrections and additions, he examines "humanity again done in by its own traffic," as well as this "crumbling/ world of empire." Death and grief are palpable in these poems as he asks: "how is it possible we live, die, and are born?" "There was a universe of words," he writes, "and in it I could fly/ sans impediment." Donnelly appears as the almost-unwilling captain of the ship of absurdity which all sail upon, and that poetry attempts to clarify. These layered poems are full of worthy questions. *(May)*

Flickering

Pattiann Rogers. Penguin, $20 (100p) ISBN 978-0-14-313766-5

Rogers's latest (after *Quickening Fields*) burnishes her reputation as a transcendental poet of science, with Emersonian grandiosity: "and the sublime universe existing.../ likewise inside the biding/ of the new moon and likewise/ inside the biding of the unknown/ existing inside the waking universe/ asleep inside the universe of the sublime." Verses of dizzying scope succumb to the gravitational pull of breathtakingly precise lines: "thumb-sized skulls of voles/ and anoles rattled by the slightest breeze, their minutely/ hinged jaws hanging open, each spine a string of slats/ thin as pine needles." In her introduction, the poet writes that she strove to make poems that would serve as "a moment escape, a settled hope, a brief assurance." The most ambitious poems exceed this aim: "What is it held within and among/ these stubs and crooked shafts,/ between what has happened and what/ has not, this trashy welter of leafy/ webs, tangles, rips, tears of torn rock?/ What is it living in these lines?" The book concludes with a section by the poet's son, a physical chemist and materials scientist, who documents the flickering of neural activity. His photographs of electrical impulses accompany snippets of Rogers's poems: "all asparkling, all aflickering, all aglow." This is a poignant homage to scientific attention and mystery. *(Apr.)*

Gravity and Center: Selected Sonnets, 1994–2022

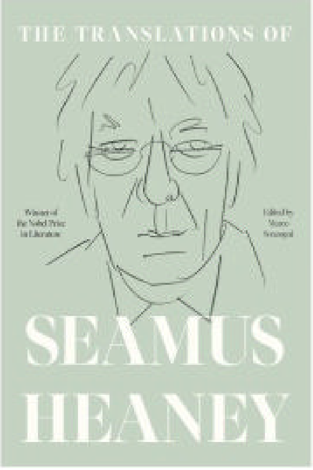
Henri Cole. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27 (176p) ISBN 978-0-374-60668-8

Suffering is neutralized by love for nature and a Zen mindset ("the sound of water poured into a bowl") in the unflinching 12th collection by Cole (*Blizzard*). These new and previously collected sonnets are not love poems, though some are sex poems: "My soul-animal prefers the choke-chain." The title poem speaks from the damaged center: "I'm sorry I cannot say I love you when you say you love me." Dysfunctional family relationships are at the root of the speaker's sense of alienation and disgust, viscerally introduced in the preface: "I came from a place with a hole in it, my body once its body, behind a beard of hair." "Chiffon Morning," reminiscent of James Merrill's "The Broken Home," expands on the mother-son relationship: "sour-milk/ breaths rehearsing death, she faces me, her room/ a pill museum where orange tea bags/ draining on napkins almost pass for art." About the speaker's father, he remembers: "My father lived in a dirty-dish mausoleum,/ watching a portable black-and-white television,/ reading the Encyclopedia Britannica,/ which he preferred to Modern Fiction." There's no easy resolution in this showcase of Cole's subtle and evocative rendering of the human experience. (*Apr.*)

★ The Translations of Seamus Heaney

Seamus Heaney. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $50 (704p) ISBN 978-0-374-27773-4

These 101 texts across 14 languages demonstrate how vital a role translation played in the imagination of Nobel Laureate Heaney (1939–2013). As the introduction notes, Heaney began translating before the publication of his 1966 debut, *Death of a Naturalist*, and was working on the last of his translations in the months before his death. This edition seeks to highlight the "cohesion" that "underscores this volume. Translation after translation, and decade after decade, the poet-translator weaved his own word-hoard and storyboard." The reader notes this continuity "of thoughts and words" even across such varied texts as the much-celebrated *Beowulf* and lesser-known works. There is the same delighting rhythm and force in lines such as "Brightening brightness, alone on the road, she appears,/ Crystalline crystal and sparkle of blue in green eyes,/ Sweetness of sweetness in her unembittered young voice/ And a high colour dawning behind the pearl of her face" ("The Glamoured," a translation of Irish 18th-century poet Aodhagán O' Rathaille) that exists in Heaney's own poems. These well-contextualized translations are a resounding testimony to Heaney's remarkable contributions to literature. (*Mar.*)



When There Was Light

Carlie Hoffman. Four Way, $17.95 trade paper (80p) ISBN 978-1-954245-42-6

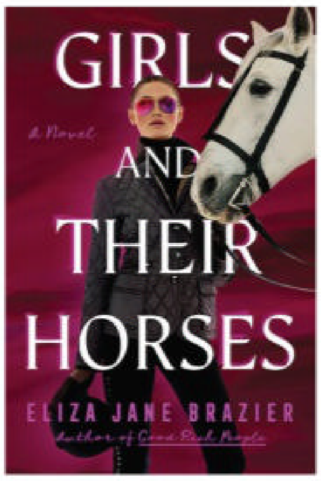
The wrenching and intimate second collection from Hoffman (after *This Alaska*) is rich with tight, lyrical poems that consider difficult subjects, such as mental health ("the gene/ of neuroticism that gorges/ on a mind") and declining physical health ("The blood/ in his heart is leaking as though/ blood is water sliding slowly/ down the spine from wet hair/ after plunging in a cold and gleaming/ stream when he was just a boy"), antisemitism, alcoholism, and the daily struggle to name what cannot be named ("There must be a word for the lack/ of words for the things we have felt all/ our lives, but couldn't name"). Silence in its many forms ("Did my family ever/ speak to one another" and "in this world I imagine/ my dead cousins dancing in a landscape") is challenged. There is also defiance in these pages ("You've watched her, dead/ center of the cornfield,/ and it can't be taken,/ her body bold/ with moonlight, laid bare"). It lands as a multifaceted and meditative look at the lasting powers of memory. (*Mar.*)

Mystery/Thriller

★ Girls and Their Horses

Eliza Jane Brazier. Berkley, $27 (416p) ISBN 978-0-593-43888-6

Horse mothers put stage mothers to shame in this wildly entertaining thriller from Brazier (*Good Rich People*). Texas transplants Heather and Jim Parker buy a $28 million house in Southern California, and arrive at the nearby Santa Fe Rancho Equestrian Center at the top of the heap. Heather will do anything to help her young teen daughter Maple win the annual horse show, including engaging in full equine combat with top "barn mom" Pamela and her vicious daughter, Vida. Meanwhile, rumors swirl around Kieran Flynn, the equestrian center's charming owner and head trainer, and his "implausibly handsome" intern. Suspicious accidents pile up gradually—a horse spooked by spilled soda, a cut stirrup—until somebody winds up dead. Brazier cleverly heightens suspense by declining to reveal the victim's identity until late in the novel, stacking motives and suspects before she finally hits readers with the gruesome murder. Her characterization impresses, too: the horses emerge as distinctive personalities in their own right as the author nimbly juggles the humans' scandalous backstories. This is a sparkling addition to Brazier's impressive career. *Agent: Sarah Bedingfield, Levine Greenberg Rostan. (June)*



Death by Chocolate Marshmallow Pie

Sarah Graves. Kensington, $27 (304p) ISBN 978-1-496-72925-5

In Graves's delightful sixth Death by Chocolate mystery (after 2022's *Death by Chocolate Chip Cupcake*), candy store owner Brad Fairway's unsavory business tactics leave a bitter taste in the mouths of chocolatiers Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and Ellie White. Brad's new shop is competing with Jake and Ellie's longtime local favorite for summer tourist dollars in the small village of Eastport, Maine, with Brad undercutting Jake and Ellie's prices and bad-mouthing their baked goods at the annual art fair. To complicate matters, Brad knows about Jake's past laundering money for the New York mob, which she'd prefer to keep under wraps. When Brad is found dead after a confrontation with Ellie, and the murder weapon is Ellie's gun, Jake sets out to find the killer and defend the life she's built for herself in Maine. Before long, she starts to worry she or Ellie could be next. A bevy of memorable characters complement the breezy, intriguing plot. Established fans and newcomers alike will be satisfied. *Agent: Christina Hogrebe, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (May)*

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Adrift

Lisa Brideau. Sourcebooks Landmark, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-72826-568-1

At the start of Brideau's uneven debut, a woman wakes up on a sailboat moored in a remote archipelago off the British Columbian coast. It's 2038, and she has no memory of her past, though she finds envelopes filled with cash and a pair of notes on board, one stating her name is Sarah Jane Song, and another warning, "Start over.... Don't look back." She sets sail in search of her identity, dubs herself Ess, and discovers she is among the growing number of "amnesia refugees" escaping climate disaster in the U.S. Ess tries to keep her memory loss under wraps as governments worldwide round up refugees like her and place them in camps. After a strong start, the plot stalls and Brideau's thoughts on the effects of climate change take center stage ("All these people see the crumbling infrastructure around them and realize climate change is real despite all the effort to deny it, and they finally realize it's going to get extremely shitty," one character clumsily monologues). The author shows promise, but struggles to cross the finish line. *Agent: Sarah Bedingfield, Levine Greenberg Rostan. (May)*

* * *

★ Six Ostriches: A Dr. Bannerman Vet Mystery

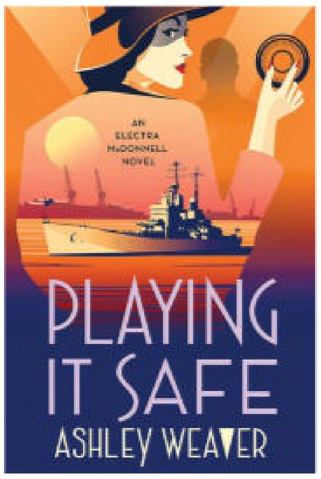
Philipp Schott. ECW, $24.95 (234p) ISBN 978-1-77041-725-0

Schott's second mystery featuring gumshoe veterinarian Peter Bannerman (after 2022's *Fifty-Four Pigs*) combines the soothing sleuthing of *Murder, She Wrote* with the humble charm of *All Creatures Great and Small*. In the fictional town of New Selfloss, Manitoba, a young sheep's throat is slit. Dr. Bannerman suspects it's the work of an Icelandic cult that's recently arrived in the region. With the help of his border collie, Pippin, Bannerman remains one step ahead of largely apathetic local RCMP investigators, including Bannerman's brother-in-law, Constable Kevin Gudmundurson. Then archaeologist Grim Struluson turns up dead, his head on a pike, and both Bannerman and the authorities pick up the pace. Schott establishes a remarkable amount of tension from the fluffy subject matter, and Bannerman remains a charming, idiosyncratic creation. Fans of small-town mysteries will enjoy the adventures of this offbeat vet sleuth. *(May)*

* * *

★ Playing It Safe: An Electra McDonnell Novel

Ashley Weaver. Minotaur, $28 (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-88587-6



Weaver's outstanding third Electra McDonnell adventure (after 2022's *The Key to Deceit*) sees McDonnell, a former safecracking thief, take on a murky new assignment from British intelligence: she knows only that she's expected to assume a new identity and leave behind her family in blitz-era London for the city of Sunderland. Shortly after arriving at her rooming house, McDonnell sees a man fall dead in the street. She quickly learns he's part of the reason she's been summoned: McDonnell's assigning officer, Major Ramsey, informs her the man was part of an ID counterfeiting scheme that makes it possible for German spies to operate in England. Despite their different working approaches, Ellie and Ramsey go undercover as a couple and develop a plan to take down the mastermind behind the scheme. Weaver populates this bright, fast-paced thriller with engagingly flawed characters and breathless action. Readers will delight at the dynamic between the leads and look forward to future adventures. *Agent: Ann Collette, Rees Literary. (May)*

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★ You Look Beautiful Tonight

L.R. Jones. Thomas & Mercer, $16.99 trade paper (350p) ISBN 978-1-66250-888-2

In this devilishly twisty standalone from Jones (*The Poet*), an unassuming librarian gets more than she bargained for from a digital admirer. Nashville librarian Mia Anderson is accustomed to being overlooked, and after her friend encourages her to sign up for a dating app, Mia starts receiving messages handwritten on her coffee cups at a local café. She's surprised to learn they're being left by Adam Roth, an attractive civil engineer she met on the app but has never seen in person. Before long, Adam is sending Mia expensive clothes and encouraging her to wear them, change her appearance, and stand up for herself more. Mia is enchanted—until Adam's manipulations turn sinister and people close to her start turning up dead. As the body count rises and Adam urges Mia to take control of her life lest he do it for her, she's terrified and tries to predict who he'll target next. Jones reveals her characters' secrets and motives slowly, expertly ratcheting up the pace before an explosive conclusion. This white-knuckler is not to be missed. *Agent: Louise Fury, Bent Agency. (May)*

* * *

Mother of the Bride Murder: A Lucy Stone Mystery

Leslie Meier. Kensington, $27 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4967-3376-4

Meier's ho-hum latest dip (after 2022's *Easter Bonnet Murder*) into the life of Lucy Stone, an intrepid reporter in Tinker's Cove, Maine, focuses on her oldest daughter, Elizabeth, who has been working as a concierge at a swanky hotel in Paris. The action begins when Elizabeth informs her mother of her upcoming marriage to Frenchman Jean-Luc Schoen-Rene. The ceremony is to be held at his family's château, and the Schoen-Renes have offered to put Elizabeth's family up during their stay. Amid the festivities, a woman's body is found in the château's moat, but the gendarmes treat her death with a shrug. This doesn't satisfy Lucy, who can't help investigating while maneuvering around family squabbles and culture clashes. Fans who started with Meier's first Lucy Stone novel in 1991 may be interested to see how the gumshoe's children and grandchildren are turning out, but the plotting in this outing is exceedingly limp. Readers looking for a worthy mystery to solve—or even a cozy one—would be better served elsewhere. *Agent: Meg Ruley, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (May)*

* * *

★ The Lie Maker

Linwood Barclay. Morrow, $30 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-06-327624-6

Barclay (*Look Both Ways*) nails this riveting standalone thriller about a washed-up writer's search for his long-lost parent. In a wrenching prologue, nine-year-old Jack Givins is separated from his father, who enters witness protection with blunt parting words: "Your dad's not a good person. Your dad killed people, son." In the present, Givins is a broke novelist hungry for whatever writing work he can get. After an offer to edit advertorial magazines falls through, he gets an even more lucrative opportunity when he's approached by the U.S. Marshals Service to create fictional backstories for individuals in the federal Witness Security Program. The position gives Givins the idea to seek out his father's whereabouts after decades of silence between the two. His efforts coincide with some high-profile disappearances, and he soon discovers the authorities have lost track of his father, sending Givins blindly on his trail. Barclay expertly knits the strands together and constructs a fully realized everyman in Givins. Crafty plotting and rich characters make this a winner. *Agent: Helen Helller, Helen Heller Agency. (May)*

Mastering the Art of French Murder: An American in Paris Mystery

Colleen Cambridge. Kensington, $26 (262p)
ISBN 978-1-4967-3959-9

This enchanting series launch from Cambridge (*A Trace of Poison*) pairs a fictional amateur sleuth with Julia Child for a murder investigation in postwar Paris. The night after Child's sister, Dort, hosts a party at Child's apartment, a guest is found dead in the basement—and the murder weapon is one of Child's knives. Tabitha Knight, a hopeless cook and fellow American expat who's befriended Child in hopes some of her culinary skills might rub off on her, takes interest in the crime. Tabitha's investigation leads her to a local English-language theater where Dort worked with the victim, and where most of the suspects are rehearsing an Agatha Christie play. While Tabitha serves as a competent narrator for this spry, sturdy whodunit, Cambridge captures Child's distinct voice and energy so perfectly—especially as she prepares meals like Madame Poulet and Monsieur Jambon—that readers will wish the chef played a larger role. Still, expect to leave this vacation hoping for a return trip. *Agent: Maura Kye-Casella, Don Congdon Assoc. (May)*

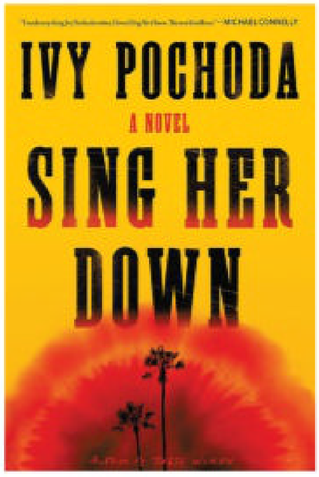
Laws of Wrath

Eriq La Salle. Poisoned Pen, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-7282-6103-4

La Salle's second thriller featuring NYPD detectives Phee Freeman and Quincy Cavanaugh (after 2022's *Laws of Depravity*) is another nail-biter that never sacrifices character for plot. Freeman and Cavanaugh have become celebrities after stopping a killer who targeted New York clergy. Their moment of glory is derailed, though, by news that Freeman's older sibling A.J. has been murdered: the killer removed A.J.'s eyelids and internal organs before abandoning the corpse in Manhattan's Chinatown. Freeman is wracked with guilt, having been estranged from A.J. for years, and winds up working on A.J.'s murder with Cavanaugh. The investigation gets even more complex when the partners learn that several murders with a similar m.o. were committed in Queens three years earlier. Police believed that killer was Daria Zibik, who's since been incarcerated, and now fear a copycat is at work. La Salle treads lurid territory without straining credulity. Fans of Jeffery Deaver will be pleased. *Agent: Rockelle Henderson, Rock Inked. (May)*

★ Sing Her Down

Ivy Pochoda. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $28 (288p) ISBN 978-0-374-60848-4



This devastating thriller from Pochoda (*These Women*) examines the brutal politics inside an Arizona women's penitentiary and the bleak mid-Covid landscape outside it. The first section focuses on three inmates: Kace, who is haunted by voices of the dead; Florida, a wealthy young white woman who was an accessory to murder, driving the getaway car while high; and Dios, Florida's former cellmate, who's determined to make Florida admit she's no better than anyone else in their situation. Due to the strain of the pandemic, Florida and Dios are released from their sentences early and flee parole on a bus to Los Angeles. On the way, the pair makes one bad decision after another, garnering the attention of Lobos, a detective who wrestles with her own guilt and rage after surviving domestic violence; their explosive interplay takes up the back half of the action. In muscular prose, Pochoda plumbs the psychological depths of her fascinating characters and extracts high drama from their shifting allegiances. This searing, accomplished page-turner deserves a wide audience. *Agent: Kim Witherspoon, InkWell Management. (May)*

Murder on the Home Front

Jessica Ellicott. Severn, $31.99 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-4483-0653-4

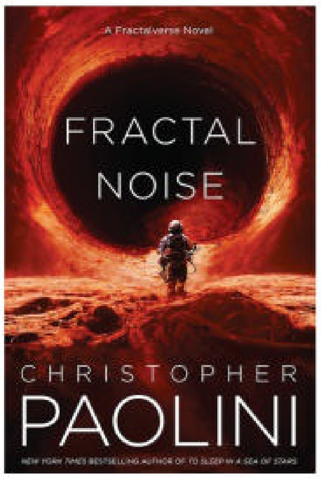
In Ellicott's intriguing second Billie Harkness mystery (after 2022's *Death in a Blackout*), naive rector's daughter Harkness is settling into her position as one of two women constables in the British city of Hull in the early days of WWII. Harkness may be inexperienced, but she has a talent for detecting, which doesn't sit well with her male colleagues, who believe policing is men's work. One afternoon, Harkness receives a report that a man posing as an air raid shelter inspector might be robbing shelters of supplies to sell on the black market. Harkness and her partner, Special Const. Peter Upton, follow up and find a man strangled to death in one of the emptied shelters. As the investigation unfolds, they discover the murdered man was involved in several shady enterprises, one of which may have gotten him killed. Harkness's colleagues don't think much of the case, but she suspects there are threads to pull—even if doing so might make her some powerful enemies. Ellicott seamlessly weaves the mystery plot into a fascinating look at life on the British home front. Historical mystery fans will find much to enjoy. *Agents: Meg Ruley and Christina Hogrebe, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (May)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

★ Fractal Noise: A Fractalverse Novel

Christopher Paolini. Tor, $28.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-86248-8

Bestseller Paolini's standalone prequel to 2020's *To Sleep in a Sea of Stars* breathes new life into the classic first encounter narrative through a sophisticated examination of the grieving narrator's psyche. In 2234, after a predator kills xenobiologist Alex Crichton's wife, Layla, on the colonized planet of Eidolon, Alex joins up with a survey expedition to get off-world, but his heart isn't in his work. He's wracked with guilt over his failure to protect Layla and barely able to do the minimum necessary for his job. His feeling that nothing matters anymore is challenged when the spaceship's cartographer detects something unprecedented on unexplored planet Talos VII: a huge, perfectly circular hole. Though the planet is believed to be devoid of life, the hole's dimensions and neatness suggest that it's artificial, and thus, potentially, "the first concrete proof of intelligent, self-aware aliens." Crichton joins the small team dispatched to Talos VII's surface to investigate, but that effort proves hazardous—and the greatest threats are those the team members pose to each other. Paolini makes the experiences of his well-shaded explorers vivid and gripping through smart worldbuilding and believable stakes. James S.A. Corey fans will be especially riveted. *(May)*


A Fractalverse Novel
FRACTAL NOISE
CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF TO SLEEP IN A SEA OF STARS

★ Our Hideous Progeny

C.E. McGill. Harper, $30 (400p) ISBN 978-0-06-325679-8

Described by debut author McGill as "*Frankenstein*, but, like, with dinosaurs," this immersive blend of historical and science fiction brims with surprises and dark delights. In Victorian England, protagonist Mary discovers her great-uncle Victor Frankenstein's life story in an old letter case. A scientist herself, she and her husband attempt to replicate and improve upon the first Frankenstein's discoveries. Instead of reviving a human corpse, however, they decide—in the interest of both safety and science—to reanimate a Plesiosaurus. McGill echoes Mary Shelley's theme of the tension between morality and scientific discovery, which works well alongside a incisive exploration of women's rights within the field of science and in Victorian society more broadly. Fiery Mary proves the perfect person to helm this tale: often full of rage, she begins to recognize her queerness as she becomes increasingly fed up with the limitations of her world. The setting, too, feels wholly authentic, making it easy to get sucked in. Readers will revel in Mary's personal and scientific discoveries and root for her to succeed in an unfair world. *(May)*

Opening Wonders

Rajnar Vajra. WordFire, $21.99 trade paper (530p) ISBN 978-1-68057-465-4

This fun but overstuffed space opera from Vajra (*Dr. Alien*) kicks off when history professor David Goldberg is drafted by UN Security to be the first human to travel to the interdimensional Commonworld, a "trans-cosmic intersection permeable to the physics of all non-parallel realities." His mission: to investigate the disappearance of an alien species called the Scome. Once there, David navigates interspecies politics, warped laws of physics, and attempts on his life, all while amusing his hosts and concealing from them his true purpose. Learning alien secrets leads to discoveries about his own heritage, which is not as Earthbound as he thought, and even meeting some long-lost family members. Vajra puts together a dizzying display of ultra-aliens and interdimensional gods (with particular attention paid to the ancient Egyptian pantheon). The result is that the family dynamic at the story's core is nearly buried under all the worldbuilding exposition. Still, for readers who have the patience to repeatedly flip back to the glossary, this offers plenty of entertainment. *(May)*

★ Another Life

Sarena Ulibarri. Stelliform, $15.99 trade paper (154p) ISBN 978-1-77768-238-5

The sparse but evocative worldbuilding of Ulibarri's brilliant solarpunk debut underpins a guarded optimism about the human condition. Galacia Aguirre is the Mediator and informal leader of Otra Vida, an intentional 2,000-person community on the edge of an artificial lake created in Death Valley to address California's climate disaster. The big buzz in Otra Vida is a newly developed technology that mines a gene database to determine an individual's past lives. As Galacia is challenged for the role of Mediator by Tanner Mendocino, a young Inheritor (second-generation Otra Vida resident), she struggles with a dark secret: her genetic profile shows her to be the reincarnation of Thomas Ramsey, the failed space colonizer generally regarded as the architect of Earth's environmental ruin. Ulibarri makes the technology sufficiently plausible while resisting the urge to overexplain it, and depicts the enemies of the community straightforwardly but not in caricature, keeping the story grounded in quiet interpersonal dynamics and a thought-provoking exploration of how the past should inform the future. With an incisive exploration of postcapitalist, back to basics living and characters readers will root for, this perfectly balances big ideas and big emotions. *(May)*

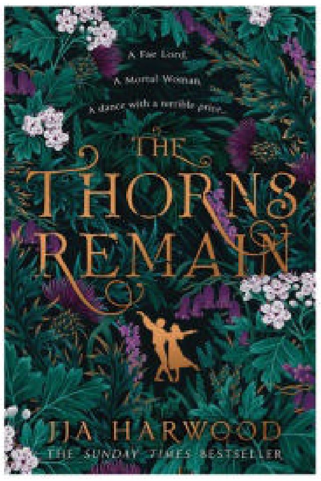
A Shadow Crown

Melissa Blair. Union Square, $17.99 trade paper (432p) ISBN 978-1-4549-4789-9

Blair disappoints in her disjointed second Halfling Saga fantasy, which picks up where *A Broken Blade* left off. Though Halfling Keera Kingsown is still bound to her duty as the King's Blade, she has joined the resistance movement to overthrow callous King Aemon, her adopted father, and works with her new companions in Faelinth to devise war plans—but a mole leaks information to the enemy. As they juggle preparing for war with rooting out the traitor, Keera also struggles to learn more about her own family history. Meanwhile, the rebels discover High Lord of the Harvest Curringham's unlawful plot to hoard an exotic fruit called winvra and smuggle Halflings out of Elverath. Sinister enough on its own, this scheme serves as a front for far more sophisticated treason. Myriad subplots drag the pace and are jarring to toggle between; even worse, the threads fail to tie together into a coherent whole. All but the most devoted series fans will be underwhelmed. *(May)*

★ The Thorns Remain

JJA Harwood. Magpie, $17.99 (416p) ISBN 978-0-00-860316-8



Harwood (*The Shadow in the Glass*) delivers an un-put-downable historical fantasy drawn from border ballads and myths of the fae. In 1919, Moira Jean Kinross is one of only six young adults left in the tiny Highland village of Brudonnock, which has been decimated by absentee English landlords, WWI, and the Spanish flu. Though still grief-stricken over the death of her fiancé, Agnus, in the war, Moira Jean convinces her five compatriots to sneak out to the woods for a party—unaware that the forest is the domain of a fae prince known as the Dreamer. In revenge, the Dreamer kidnaps Moira Jean's friends, forcing them into an endless, deadly dance. It's up to Moira Jean to bargain for their freedom with the Dreamer, who demands increasingly difficult-to-obtain goods in trade ("a piece of a new-born"; "something that you have lost"). At the same time, she must keep the village running without them—and evade the Dreamer's clutches as he begins to pursue her romantically. Harwood does a masterful job shading both her glamorous villain and her tenacious heroine; the introduction of Moira Jean's bisexuality is particularly well-done, grounded in realistic-feeling historical thought patterns. The author also has a knack for building tension, keeping the pages flying throughout. This is not to be missed. *(May)*

Dual Memory

Sue Burke. Tor, $29.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-250-80913-1

Burke (*Symbiosis*) explores art and artificial intelligence in this clever near-future adventure. The dual narrators, one human and one computer, meet on the small arctic island of Thule, run by altruistic doctors. Antonio Moro is a Bronzewing mercenary defending the island from the Leviathon League raiders bent on enslaving its civilians when he is blasted from a rusty garbage barge. Injured, he's left to recover ashore, and secretly ordered by Bronzewing Captain Soliana to root out raider infiltrators. He's also linked to a personal assistant program, Par Augustus (or "Venerable Companion"), one of only four extant independent intelligent machines. Illiterate Antonio, a self-taught artist who is invariably polite to machines, and Par, a prickly manipulator capable of well-meant deceit, make an unlikely duo, but together they just might be able to save Thule from the Leviathon League. Burke loads the story with fascinating characters as she probes how humanity's artistic capacity to inspire might interact with AI's flexible intelligence. This playful glimpse of nonthreatening human-machine interaction is sure to charm. *(May)*

The Language of Water

Elizabeth Clark-Stern. Aqueduct, $19 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-61976-234-3

Clark-Stern (*Soul Stories*) deploys setting and description with vibrant economy in this near-future cli-fi dystopia, but character and worldbuilding fare less well. Surrounded by old-school patriarchy, which the world has reverted to by 2100, the heroines—Sara, a starry-eyed Kurdish adolescent; Ruqia, a hard-bitten rebel commander; Kethuda, a Turkish politician and autocrat's daughter; and Gai, her Kenyan servant in touch with ancient wisdom—are fairy tale simplifications. Turkey controls the limited water supply for what remains of the drought-stricken Middle East. Sara and Ruqia poach from this well while Kethuda nominally controls the trade contracts for it, but is undermined at every turn by powerful men. The rationale for why their society looks this way is unfortunately lacking. What happened to spur the universal reversion to extreme patriarchy? What became of climate-change mitigation technologies? Without connection to the known, this blasted world is like a CGI backdrop: momentarily stunning but easily parsed as artifice. Clark-Stern's hand-waving extends throughout the plot; her true focus is on exploring the evolution of feminine power through a loosely connected series of Jungian imagery. At such a rarefied level of abstraction, the story is what suffers. *(May)*

★ The Will of the Many

James Islington. Saga, $29.99 (688p) ISBN 978-1-982141-17-2

Maintaining suspense for almost 700 pages is a tall order, but Islington (the Licanius trilogy) makes it look easy in his staggering Hierarchy series launch, set in a world dominated by the Roman Empire-esque Hierarchy. The Hierarchy maintains its power through an insidious scheme: those at the top draw energy, or Will, from those beneath them, who "voluntarily" cede some of their strength to benefit from the system. Against this backdrop, prison worker Vis, 17, must conceal that he's really Diago, the prince of Suus, a kingdom vanquished by the Hierarchy when it executed Vis's family. Vis gets an opportunity for revenge when he's adopted by a powerful senator, Ulciscor Telimus, who wants him to join the Catenan Academy, where the next generation of Hierarchy leadership is trained. Ulciscor's brother, Caeror, died there under suspicious circumstances, and Ulciscor hopes Vis can find the truth. But Vis's options change after an encounter with violent rebels seeking to topple the Hierarchy. Islington's worldbuilding is exceptionally detailed and thoughtful, making suspending disbelief effortless. Perfectly balancing character development and plot momentum, this will have fantasy aficionados clamoring for more. *Agent: Paul Lucas, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc.* *(May)*

The Left Hand of Dog

Si Clarke. White Hart, $13.99 trade paper (206p) ISBN 978-1-916287-85-3

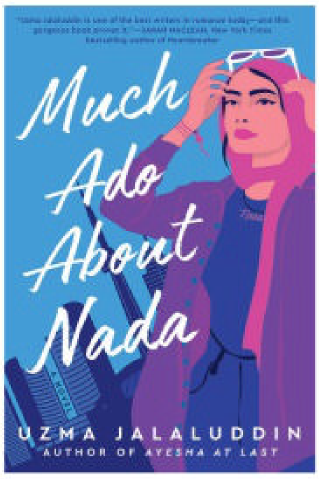
Clarke (*Devon's Island*) takes readers on a quirky galactic romp replete with laughs, insights into human foibles, self-aware nods to sci-fi classics, and thoughtful explorations of gender and sexuality. After nonbinary Torontonian Leighton "Lem" McMaster and her German Shepherd, Spock, are abducted by aliens, they wake on a spaceship where they are interrogated by an alien race that Lem dubs bunnyboos due to their resemblance to a stuffed rabbit she had as a child. These bunnyboos, though, are bounty hunters and claim Spock broke intergalactic law and they intend to bring her to the authorities for trial. En route, Lem befriends fellow prisoners Bexley, a horse-like alien mechanic; BB, a big yellow bird doctor; Henry, a belligerent rubbish bin robot; and Aurora, a cloud of glittery gas indentured as the ship's cook. To communicate with this motley crew, Lem wears an AI translator that mines her encyclopedic knowledge of science-fiction for words like "flux capacitor," "dilithium crystals," and "unobtanium." Spock also gets a translator to heart-warming effect. Together, these delightful misfits plot their escape. As a stranger in a strange land, Lem gets perspective on her human hang-ups and finds family in the most unexpected of places. This amusing if slightly unpolished adventure is a treat for sci-fi fans. *(Self-published)*

Romance/Erotica

★ Much Ado About Nada

Uzma Jalaluddin. Berkley, $17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-593-33638-0

Jalaluddin's delightful latest (after *Hana Khan Carries On*) puts a rom-com spin on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Nada Syed works hard to launch the "Ask Apa" app, designed to offer sisterly advice to Toronto's Muslim community, but a dishonest business partner undermines her efforts, forcing her to return to an engineering job she hates. As she approaches her 30th birthday, Nada is grappling both with this professional disappointment and with mounting parental pressure to find a spouse. To lift her spirits, Nada's best friend, Haleema, takes her to Deen&Dunya, an annual Muslim convention ("like Comic-Con, except with hijabs"), for the weekend. There, Nada will finally meet Haleema's fiancé, Zayn, and grudgingly participate in a speed-dating event. Upon arriving, however, Nada's shocked to learn that Zayn's brother is Baz Haq, whom she's known since grade school and with whom she had an intense on-and-off relationship in college. As Nada navigates the convention, she and Baz try to conceal their romantic history from their loved ones while grappling with their unresolved emotions and simmering sexual tension. Jalaluddin makes their rekindling romance positively swoonworthy, and interfering family members and rich cultural detail add to this romance's power. Austenite or not, readers will be swept away. *Agent: Ann Collette, Rees Literary. (June)*



Our Place on the Island

Erika Montgomery. Griffin, $17 Trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-78379-0

Three generations of women reunite at their family's beach house in this passionate tale of love and loss from Montgomery (*A Summer to Remember*). In 1948, working-class newlywed Cora Campbell struggles to fit in to her husband's world of wealth. Her neighbors are judgy and her husband is often away on business. Then she meets Max Dempsey, the contractor hired to renovate her kitchen, and the pair develop a strong bond. In 1999, three years after Cora's husband's death, she and Max announce their engagement. Her daughter, Hedy, and granddaughter, Mickey, head to Cora's home on Martha's Vineyard to celebrate, but secrets threaten to derail the joyful gathering. Hedy is not pleased with someone replacing her father and suspects that her mother may have been having an affair with Max years ago. Mickey, who's always had a close bond with her grandmother, is more supportive of the union, but she's keeping a secret from her own boyfriend that casts a pall on her mood. Toggling between the two timelines, Montgomery tells a stirring, magnetic story about the tension between commitment and desire. The characters are as flawed as they are sweet, and their bond rings true. The result is a nostalgic tale that will warm the coldest hearts. *(June)*

Leave It to the March Sisters

Annie Sereno. Forever, $16.99 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-1-5387-2146-9

Sereno revisits the small college town she introduced in *Blame It on the Brontës* for a witty riff on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Sereno's take on the classic keeps the spotlight on Amy, chair of the English department at Southern Illinois College, rather than her sister Jo, a Seattle high school teacher, or Meg, who, in this telling, is their mother. (There's no Beth in sight.) Amy and med school dropout Theo Sinclair, her childhood friend and first crush, had a major falling-out years before the start of the book, but when Amy's deadbeat boyfriend kicks her out, Amy has nowhere else to turn and she and Theo wind up as roommates. The pair reconcile—and even flirt—but Amy's convinced that Theo is hung up on Jo and will never think of her the same way. Sereno handles her characters' transition from friends to lovers with grace and includes just enough echoes of Alcott's original to enchant *Little Women* aficionados while keeping them guessing. Cameos from the previous books' leads are an extra treat for returning readers. Sereno's fans will be pleased. *Agent: Erin Niumata and Rachel Ekstrom, Folio Literary. (May)*

Falling Hard for the Royal Guard

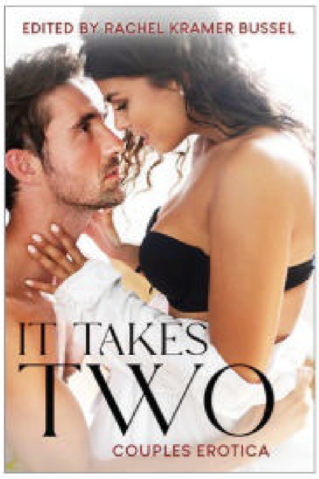
Megan Clawson. Avon, $16.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-00-855441-5

TikTok phenom Clawson draws from personal experience to take readers inside modern life in the Tower of London in her slow-burning debut romance. As the daughter of a beefeater, Maggie Moore, 26, is one of a tight-knit community living in the tower. Quirky and self-assured, Maggie sustains herself on her obsession with British history, Tower ghost stories, and romance novels. But she's also struggling after a devastating breakup and in the face of cruel daily harassment by her boss and coworkers in her dead-end job selling tickets to Tower tourists. Then she (literally) bumps into Freddie Guilford, a gorgeous royal guard who looks like one of the characters from her romance novels. Though she's sworn off relationships, Maggie is immediately love-struck. For his part, Freddie, the scion of a powerful family, wants to carve out a path for himself unrelated to his family's pedigree and can't afford distractions. As Freddie fights his feelings for Maggie, Maggie works to get the unflappable guard's attention and Clawson dispenses plenty of genuine Tower history lessons. It's a charming romp. *(May)*

It Takes Two

Edited by Rachel Kramer Bussel. Cleis, $18.95 trade paper (218p) ISBN 978-1-62778-328-6

Bussel, the editor of Cleis's Best Women's Erotica series, brings together 19 sizzling stories of committed couples trying new things. "The couples you'll meet within these stories are adventurous, wild, and ready to go there," Bussel promises in her enthusiastic introduction—and she delivers in spades. Standouts include Jodie Griffin's BDSM-infused "Little Red Goes to Kink Camp"; Christina Berry's "Getaway from the Everyday," featuring hotel sex between a long-married couple; and Quenby's "Welcome Home," a red-hot sapphic tale. Katrina Jackson makes a threesome bittersweet in "The Last Night," while D. Fostalove brings some grit to the steamy gay male encounter at the center of "Small Change." Birch Rosen's sexy "The Pink Lady," which stars a trans woman, and the queer sci-fi tale "Out of Orbit" by R. Magdalen, which includes enticing futuristic ways to connect sexually, round things out. This inclusive, bighearted anthology offers something from nearly every genre enjoyed by erotica lovers. Anyone looking for romance with maximum heat should snap this up. *(May)*



Stars Collide

Rachel Lacey. Montlake, $16.99 trade paper (316p) ISBN 978-1-66250-911-7

Lacey (*Read Between the Lines*) pairs up pop stars in this uneven sapphic rom-com. Eden Sands, 36, needs a win. Her latest album is underperforming, and she's struggling to get her life on track after her divorce. To shake things up, she agrees to add up-and-comer Anna Moss, 27, to her Grammys performance. When their duet stirs up buzz, her manager suggests inviting Anna to open for Eden on tour. Anna's thrilled: Eden has been her idol and celebrity crush since her teenage years. Because pansexual Anna is out and proud, fans begin to speculate about the chemistry between the two performers, even creating a ship name: Edanna. Eden is happy for the attention, but she's also sure she's straight and insists that her feelings for Anna are purely platonic. As the pair spend more time together on the road, however, Anna develops real feelings and Eden questions her sexuality. It's an achingly slow build undermined by a rushed third-act conflict and an unearned sickly sweet epilogue. Unfortunately, this wonky pacing detracts from the story's power. This is more likely to make readers frustrated than it is to make them swoon. *Agent: Sarah Younger, Nancy Yost Literary. (May)*

North Bay Road

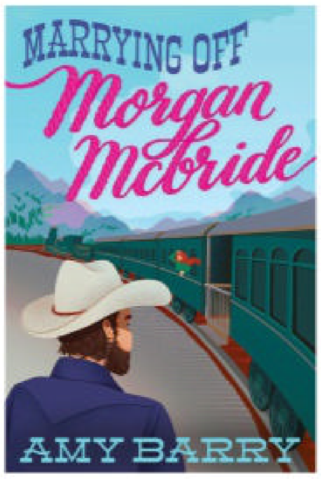
Richard Kirshenbaum. Post Hill, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-1-63758-862-8

This uneven contemporary from Kirshenbaum (*Rouge*) kicks off when New York fashion stylist Liz Galin mysteriously inherits a multimillion-dollar Miami estate from a stranger. After verifying the authenticity of this bizarre windfall, she's excited about her change of fortune, which includes a million dollars annually to be spent on renovations. To claim it, however, Liz must move to Miami for six months and a day to establish Florida residency, and her doctor boyfriend is unable to come with her. Instead, she invites her gay best friend, Roy, and the pair get to work restoring the property. Liz's new neighbor is pop star G Alvarez, who, after a bad first impression, becomes a welcome distraction for Liz as they flirt and bond over emotional scars: G opens up about his manager sexually abusing him as a child, and the descriptions are graphic. Meanwhile, Liz discovers the diary of her benefactor, Elsa, and interspersed passages connect the women across time and reveal a parallel love story. The pacing feels off-kilter, with a slow start and a rushed ending, and so much going on overwhelms the romantic development between Liz and G. There are some moving moments, but romance fans will be underwhelmed. *Agent: Laura Yorke, Laura Yorke Literary. (May)*

Marrying Off Morgan McBride

Amy Barry. Berkley, $17 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-33559-8

Matchmaking Junebug McBride is at it again in Barry's charming return to small-town Buck's Creek, Mont. (after *Kit McBride Gets a Wife*). In 1887, Junebug is tired of being cook and housekeeper to her four older brothers and places ads on their behalf in the *Matrimonial News*—without their knowledge. She hopes finding a mail-order bride for the eldest, Morgan, will keep him from leaving town. The perennially unlucky-in-love Epiphany "Pip" Hopgood answers Junebug's ad, leaving small-town Nebraska behind for Montana and an exciting new life (with her firecracker of a grandmother in tow). Morgan, a cowboy who dropped everything to raise his younger siblings after their mother's death, is eager to hit the trail again and is none too happy to deal with a bold, beautiful woman who believes herself to be his fiancée—but he also can't deny his attraction to Pip. Barry loads the entertaining plot with convincing twists and turns, genuine laugh-out-loud moments, and spitfire characters. Pip's grandmother, Granny Colfax, especially steals the show. Readers will hope for a quick return to Buck's Creek. *Agent: Sarah Younger, Nancy Yost Literary. (May)*



How Not to Marry a Duke

Tina Gabrielle. Entangled Amara, $8.99 mass market (352) ISBN 978-1-64937-378-6

Gabrielle's fast-paced second Daring Ladies Regency (after *One Night with an Earl*) pairs a stoic white duke and the strong-willed, mixed-race daughter of an earl. After Adeline Foster's father dies, her white half brother, Edwin, throws Adeline, whose mother was Lebanese, out of her childhood home and into the family's run-down hunting cottage. There, her new neighbor, the handsome but unpleasant Daniel Millstone, Duke of Warwick, pays a visit, ending in a skirmish with Adeline's pet pig, Henry. Daniel left the bustle of society to focus on his scientific studies and he wants to be sure that Adeline's presence will not distract him. But when Daniel hears of Edwin's plan to force Adeline into an unwanted marriage to save their family from financial ruin, he does something rash and proclaims that he is courting Adeline. The ruse will protect Adeline from the unwanted match, but to pull it off, the bickering duo will have to persuade both their families and all of society that they are in love. Gabrielle delivers plenty of fun banter without shying away from the racist realities of the time. Fans of the fake relationship trope and anyone looking for diverse historical romance should check this out. *Agent: Stephany Evans, Pande Literary. (May)*

Comics

Grand Slam Romance

Ollie Hicks and Emma Oosterhous. Surely, $24.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-4197-5801-0

Married creators Hicks and Oosterhous pitch a playful chronicle of the romances and rivalries of a queer softball league. The star is Mickey Monsoon, nonbinary heartthrob and ace pitcher for the Belle City Broads. The Broads are all set to win the year's tournament with their five-time MVP on the mound, but Mickey is thrown a curveball when their crush Astra Maxima, a licentious catcher with magical powers, joins the competition. Astra's prowess as a player, both on the field and in the bedroom, proves hard to beat; off their game, Mickey resigns, until a secret squad is formed with the sole purpose of stopping Astra. Captaining that team is Wolfgang, a six-foot-plus German butch who dated Astra when the two of them were students at the same Swiss softball academy and is bent on her own lovelorn revenge. Oosterhous's exuberant, confectionary artwork plays well off Hicks's rakish script, with the duo changing it up between the madcap puerility of sports manga and unadulterated prurience of an Apatow romp to sometimes rousing—if occasionally cornball—effect. Fans of *A League of Their Own* should slide head-first into this series. *(May)*

Hogbook and Lazer Eyes

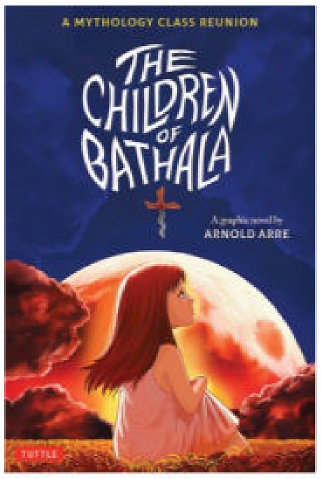
Maria Bamford and Scott Marvel Cassidy. Fantagraphics, $19.99 (64p) ISBN 978-1-68396-773-6

Comedian Bamford (of the streaming series *Lady Dynamite*) and her husband, artist Cassidy, sketch out their life together in a series of wry, pug-centric vignettes. The two met on OkCupid after being intrigued by each other's bizarre screen names and discovered they had plenty in common—including histories of mental illness and "a lot of issues." They also both loved dogs, and their menagerie, mostly comprising adopted pugs, soon dominates the narrative. Those pets (and, in one memorable installment, a dog bed) take turns narrating—Bamford's and Cassidy's engagement gets less space than the four-legged adventures, such as when Bert the pug burrows into a trash bag full of cupcakes. Cassidy has a knack for bringing the animals and their spaces to life; if the dogs are drawn with more care and personality than the human characters, that's apropos. There are dips into absurdist comedy (one of the pugs attempts a stand-up act), but it's not strictly a gag book, and though the co-creators have insights to share about living with mental illness and trauma, they don't attempt deep revelations. Those fond of visiting friends mainly to pet dogs will enjoy this invitation into the Bamford-Cassidy crew's day-to-day. *(May)*

★ The Children of Bathala: A Mythology Class Reunion

Arnold Arre. Tuttle, $16.99 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-0-8048-5543-3

In Arre's heartfelt sequel to the seminal Filipino graphic novel *The Mythology Class*, once close-knit friends have learned that heroism doesn't necessarily end in glory. Two decades after their fantastic adventure as college students, they've crashed down in the mundane. Nicole, whose knowledge of Philippine folklore guided the group, is struggling to get her anthropological research taken seriously. Her husband, Kubin, a legendary warrior from another realm, is growing weaker while their daughter grows distant. Lane, the burgeoning psychic, has lost her clairvoyant powers. The spitfire Misha left the country, and her ex-fiancé has spent years tracking her down. All of the group struggle with recurring nightmares of the supernatural creatures they once battled, and with frustration about the rules that Nicole put in place about how to use the reward they won. When a new danger threatens, they must work together once again while also battling anger and mistrust. Arre sensitively depicts the disillusionment that comes when realities of work, grief, and failed relationships shatter youthful aspirations. But as the ensemble renew their faith in friendship and learn to protect rather than fight, they mend broken bonds. Arre's artwork also has matured, with smooth lines and expressions that convey a wealth of emotion. This grown-up adventure ends on a cliffhanger, but even as readers await the next plot point, the interior journeys of the characters make this volume a fulfilling standalone read. Arre's fans will certainly want to catch up with this class, and will cross fingers for a future volume. *(Mar.)*



Fart School

Mel Stringer. Silver Sprocket, $24.99 (200p) ISBN 979-8-88620-015-7

Surprisingly poignant given its flip title, Stringer's sincere and witty debut memoir recounts her early 2000s decision to leave her small hometown in Australia to attend art school in big-city Brisbane. She hopes to become a professional cartoonist, but upon discovering she's too late to enroll in the animation program, Stringer reluctantly opts to study visual arts, where she encounters a faculty and student body who amplify her self-doubt and anxiety about her chosen career path. Struggling with coursework she finds uninspiring and sparring with instructors (who are running out the clock in dilapidated facilities slated for demolition), she maintains her sanity trading zines and demo CDs with artist friends. Devotees of Dan Clowes's beloved teenage dramadies will appreciate Stringer's neurotic, angsty worldview as she tries to find her way in the adult world. Though this is most likely to strike a chord with actual past and present art school comrades, any reader who's ever felt like a fish out of water will be drawn in by the irresistible loose cartoony art style and cheery color palette. This funny portrait of the artist as a young adult is a charmer. *(Mar.)*

Nonfiction

The Overlooked Americans: The Resilience of Our Rural Towns and What It Means for Our Country

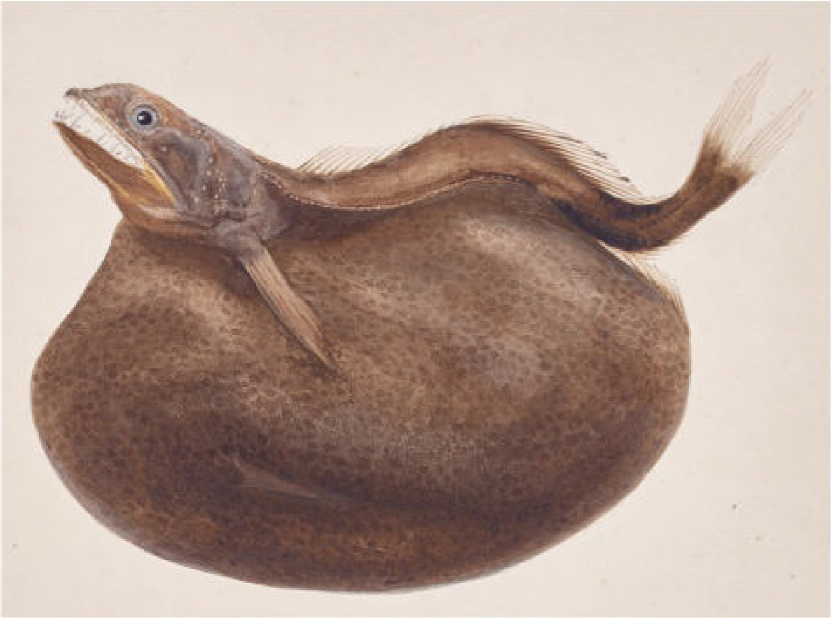
Elizabeth Currid-Halkett. Basic, $32 (432p) ISBN 978-1-5416-4672-8

In this astute survey, Currid-Halkett (*The Sum of Small Things*), a professor of urban planning and public policy at the University of Southern California, challenges the "myth" of an America split apart by geography. Drawing on statistical data and interviews with people from across the country, she debunks the prevailing view of small-town America as poorer, less educated, and more illiberal than the nation's metropolitan areas. This skewed perspective, she claims, is based partly on ignorance, but mostly on media outlets that traffic in fear, anger, and anxiety and politicians who find value in sewing discord. While distinctions do exist (rural Americans talk more about religion, have a greater sense of community, and are less invested in meritocracy; urbanites are more outspoken about progressive issues like abortion rights and gay marriages and more accepting of the government), on objective measures such as income and voting behavior and subjective measures such as happiness and empathy, Currid-Halkett's research reveals more similarities than differences. Though she highlights numerous issues facing America, including vaccine skepticism, climate denialism, and educational inequality, Currid-Halkett is a strong believer in "our shared sense of humanity [and] our belief in each other." Idealistic yet well-grounded, this is a refreshing antidote to doom and gloom prognostications of where America is headed. *(June)*

The Corporation and the Twentieth Century: The History of American Business Enterprise

Richard N. Langlois. Princeton Univ., $50 (752p) ISBN 978-0-691-24698-7

Corporations are as much a creation of war, depression, and government fiat as of scientific management, according to this sweeping history. University of Connecticut economist Langlois (*The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism*) examines the factors that contributed to the 20th-century rise of centrally planned corporations, distinguished by their integration of multiple business functions in a single firm (Ford, for instance, was a mining company, steel maker, electric utility, parts manufacturer, auto assembler, and retailer). These factors include antitrust laws that criminalized forms of cooperation between independent companies yet were legal within a single corporation's business divisions (bicycle maker Schwinn was hit with an antitrust lawsuit in the 1960s for cutting exclusive deals with regional distributors, a practice that would have been legal if Schwinn owned the distributors) and the Great Depression, during which government regulation of competing ways of organizing business left the corporation as an increasingly attractive option. Langlois embeds his sharp analysis within a searching, unconventional survey of economic history, arguing, for example, that most New Deal policies did little to alleviate the Great Depression and that government coordination of war production mainly flopped. Chock-full of sophisticated economic theory rendered in lucid prose, this adds up to a bracing evaluation of a consequential and once dominant commercial entity. *(June)*



Chiasmodon*, a 1930 painting based on naturalist William Beebe's observations of deep-sea creatures off the coast of Bermuda, as seen in Brad Fox's* The Bathysphere Book *(reviewed on p. 67).*

Scoundrels: Political Scandals in American History

J. Michael Martinez. Rowman & Littlefield, $38 (264p) ISBN 978-1-5381-3079-7

Political scientist Martinez (*Libertines*) examines in this solid survey the long history of greed, corruption, and deceit in American politics. Ranging from the Yazoo Land Fraud of 1795, in which private land companies bribed a group of Georgia state legislators into enacting a law that allowed them to sell lands from the state's western border for "scandalously attractive prices," to Donald Trump's efforts to stymie investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, Martinez offers brisk and insightful accounts of 13 different scandals. Some are well-known—Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair, Abscam—while others are less familiar, including former vice president Aaron Burr's 1805 scheme to "lead a private army into Spanish territory to grab as much land as he could" and North Dakota governor William "Wild Bill" Langer's 1934 trial for soliciting political contributions from state and federal employees. Throughout, Martinez makes clear the lasting damage that even a whiff of scandal can do to citizens' faith in democracy, analyzes the factors that allowed some politicians to withstand allegations of corruption while others didn't, and sheds light on the "powerful, corrosive effect of money in American politics." American history buffs will savor this detailed yet accessible roundup of political imbroglios. *(June)*

Inventing Photography: William Henry Fox Talbot in the Bodleian Library

Geoffrey Batchen. Bodleian Library, $65 (240p) ISBN 978-1-851-24596-3

Batchen (*Negative/Positive*), a history professor at the University of Oxford, surveys the career of Henry Fox Talbot in this illuminating, richly illustrated offering. Popularly known as the "English inventor of photography," Talbot discovered in 1834 that paper coated with silver chloride solution was light sensitive and capable of rendering facsimiles of flat objects, such as leaves or a piece of lace. In 1840, Talbot perfected the process, which he dubbed "calotype" (literally, "beautiful picture") by adding gallic acid to the solution, allowing images to develop in a fraction of the time. While his early photographic innovations were focused on possible applications in science and industry, Talbot later became interested in art and aesthetics, and photographed still life arrangements and experimented with composition and focus. As well, the author details how Talbot sometimes artistically exploited the visual distortions of the camera's lens, including elevated views and manipulations in scale and scope, anticipating the style of modernist photography. Batchen draws on a fascinating mix of work from the inventor's career—Talbot's renderings of lace, which in his day were regarded as trompe l'oeil wizardry, still seem arrestingly true to life—and brings Talbot's artistic evolution to life in energetic prose. This foray into the origins of photography delights. Photos. *(June)*

Talking on Eggshells: Soft Skills for Hard Conversations

Sam Horn. New World Library, $18.99 trade paper (360p) ISBN 978-1-608-68849-4

In this upbeat entry, executive coach Horn (*Tongue Fu*) shares tools to help the conflict-averse sharpen their communication skills. Horn writes that while humans are socialized to sidestep conflict, doing so has a lot of downsides—simmering anger, anxiety, and even burnout—but instead of "fighting fire with fire," Horn writes that readers should do the opposite: use "positive, proactive responses" so others will respond in kind. First, readers should work on their "interpersonal situational awareness," or the ability to assess social situations, which can include thinking before speaking ("Will I be sorry I said this?") or observing body language ("Is someone agreeing, yet their clenched jaw shows they're resistant?"). Horn outlines ways to tackle issues such as being teased (avoid taking the taunter's bait) and rudeness (using "friendly phrases that establish a tone of civility," is a good defuser), and while some of the advice is easier said than done—such as the suggestion to grow a thicker skin—the grounding principles are clearheaded, and readers will be heartened by the message that they don't have to sacrifice honesty for civility or vice versa. Wallflowers looking to step out of their comfort zone should pick this up. *(June)*

Social Justice for the Sensitive Soul: How to Change the World in Quiet Ways

Dorcas Cheng-Tozun. Broadleaf, $26.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-506-48343-6

Cheng-Tozun (*Start, Love, Repeat*), editorial director at Christian nonprofit PAX, offers valuable guidance for those who want to fight for social justice without standing at the front of a rally with a bullhorn. Sensitive, introverted people have unique gifts, such as "empathy, perception... and an innate ability to bond with others," the author explains, but are prone to burnout in the activist world of "protests and pushback, debates, and callouts." For that reason, before volunteering or working at a social justice organization, sensitive people should consider its environment, in terms of both its culture and its physical space (obtrusive lights and sounds can become overwhelming); seek out "supportive, meaningful relationships" in social justice communities; and avoid working for causes that might induce "empathy fatigue" in the long run. Cheng-Tozun outlines roles sensitive people often thrive in: their attention to detail makes them ideal record-keepers (for example, as archivists or historians), and their thoughtfulness is especially useful in disciplines such as engineering, where empathy "is at the very heart of creating products and technologies that address major social inequities." Herself a sensitive person who built a meaningful social justice career—encountering more than a few episodes of burnout along the way—the author draws usefully on her own experiences to deliver an encouraging message that reframes sensitivity as an asset, not a liability. This practical, energizing entry will prove a handy resource for the withdrawn. *(June)*

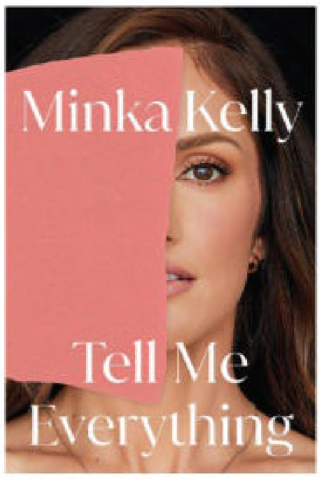
Photography in Korea

Jeehey Kim. Reaktion, $50 (272p) ISBN 978-1-7891-4710-0

Kim, an assistant art history professor at the University of Arizona, surveys the history of Korean photography in this fascinating, dense debut. Photography was brought into the country in the late 19th century as "part of an enlightenment

★ Tell Me Everything: A Memoir

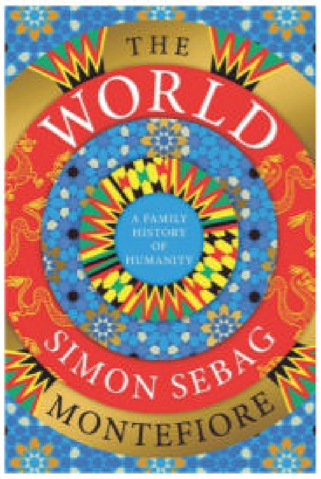
Minka Kelly. Holt, $28.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-250-85206-9



Actor Kelly recalls her far-from-privileged upbringing and reflects on the skills that helped her survive it in this heart-stopping debut. In nonlinear vignettes, Kelly recounts her chaotic childhood as the daughter of an addict—which she paints in stark contrast to her breakout role as pampered *Friday Night Lights* cheerleader Lyla Garrity—and recalls her intense longing "to have a regular mom who did regular things." She bounced from one stranger's home to another, stayed in storage units, and endured ruthless bullying, eventually working in a peep show as a teenager to earn enough money for her first apartment. Resisting pressure to undergo cosmetic surgery for the sake of her budding entertainment career, Kelly instead trained as a surgical nurse, resolving that "my career as an actress can vanish tomorrow, but no one will ever be able to take away from me what I can do with my mind and my hands." She also details moving reunions as an adult with her father, Aerosmith guitarist Rick Duffay, and her mother, with whom she made peace before she died of cancer. Despite sometimes horrific obstacles, Kelly resists painting herself as a victim, instead suffusing her story with gratitude and humility. It's an immensely moving story of one woman's unconquerable spirit. *(May)* effort by the royal court and the intelligentsia," and later harnessed as a propaganda tool by the Japanese during the First Sino-Japanese War. Kim explains how Korean photographers played an "instrumental role in establishing photography as an art form," showcasing newspaper photos in avant-garde, surrealist, and modernist styles, while in the 1950s, the devastation of the Korean War gave rise to the *Saenghwaljuui* realism movement ("Realism Rooted in Daily Life"), which depicted citizens' everyday struggles amid seismic postwar shifts. In addition to spotlighting influential photographers such as Cheol Hwang and Suk-Je Lim, Kim pays due to the norm-bending work of Korean feminist photographers who rebelled against the medium's male-dominated culture by highlighting female power, as in Young-Sook Park's photomontage of a pregnant woman, which graced the cover of an 1997 feminist magazine. Kim draws on a selection of striking images to bring alive Korean politics, foreign relations, and norms, making this both a comprehensive history of Korean photography and a worthy examination of Korean identity. Photography enthusiasts will want to have a look. Photos. *(June)*

★ The World: A Family History of Humanity

Simon Sebag Montefiore. Knopf, $45 (1,344p) ISBN 978-0-525-65953-2



Violence, treachery, and sex are the motors of history in this sweeping chronicle. Historian and novelist Montefiore (*The Romanovs*) surveys wars, massacres, revolutions, plagues, famine, and socioeconomic transformations from the rise of the Mesopotamian city states to the Biden administration, giving China, India, Africa, central Asia, and pre-Columbian America as much space as the West. Focusing on ruling dynasties and their dysfunctions, Montefiore notes that the Ottoman Empire's official succession procedure included royal sons killing each other off, and that the future Frederick the Great of Prussia was forced by his father to watch the beheading of his best friend for their presumed homosexual affair. Montefiore makes women central to the story, as queens and regents or as mothers and mistresses manipulating feckless kings. (They also hold their own in mayhem: the seventh-century Chinese royal concubine Miss Wu allegedly broke up Emperor Gaozong's marriage by killing her own infant daughter and framing the Empress for murder.) And there's plenty of sex, with the orgies of Rodrigo Borgia—aka Pope Alexander VI—perhaps taking the prize for debauchery. Setting a whirlwind pace, Montefiore skillfully guides readers through the tumult with elegant prose and evocative character sketches. It's a bravura performance. *(May)*

★ The Bathysphere Book: Effects of the Luminous Ocean Depths

Brad Fox. Astra House, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-1-66260-190-3

In this mesmerizing history, novelist Fox (*To Remain Nameless*) draws on research notes from a trio of pioneering deep-sea explorers to offer a lyrical meditation on the mysteries of the ocean. In the late 1920s, engineer Otis Barton and "protoecologist" William Beebe developed the bathysphere, a "four-and-a-half foot steel ball... fitted with two three-inch quartz windows" that could carry them thousands of feet below the surface of the ocean. In a series of dives off the coast of Bermuda, they partnered with scientist Gloria Hollister, who recorded their observations via telephone line. (Hollister also made her own record-setting dives in the bathysphere.) Among other insights, Beebe took note of how the sunlight receded the further he dove, until the bathysphere was surrounded by "the deepest black-blue imaginable," and described bizarre, bioluminescent creatures, including siphonophores, which appear "to be a single organism" but are in reality "a colony of smaller animals—polyps and other beings called zooids." Photographs were impossible, so Beebe worked with artists to visually recreate his observations; Fox includes many of those striking images. Some of the species Beebe described have never been seen again, giving credence to Barton's assertion that the two were on an "oxygen jag" during certain dives. Original and often profound, this is a moving testament to the wonders of exploration. Illus. *(May)*

Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden

Camille T. Dungy. Simon & Schuster, $28.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-982195-30-4

In this meditative outing, poet Dungy (*Guidebook to Relative Strangers*) reflects on race and history while discussing the garden she maintains outside her Colorado home. "No matter how many years have passed, no perennial in life's garden roots more deeply than history," she contends, using her garden as a metaphor to explore the complex historical relationship between Black Americans and the land. She tells of moving in 2013 with her husband and young daughter, Callie, to a majority-white neighborhood in Fort Collins, Colo., where she started a plot of flowers and vegetables in her yard. Gardening, she writes, helps her "feel rooted," and she recounts taking pains to explain to Callie the difference between their choosing to garden and the labor of enslaved people forced to work the land. Poems inspired by nature appear throughout, serving as connective tissue for ruminations on the garden of Harlem Renaissance poet Anne Spencer, 19th-century naturalist John Muir's racism and sexism, and the overlap between environmental and racial justice. Fans of Dungy's poetry will delight in her sparkling prose, and the wide-ranging meditations highlight the connections between land, freedom, and race. It's a lyrical and pensive take on what it means to put down roots. Photos. *(May)*

Sky Above Kharkiv: Dispatches from the Ukranian Front

Serhiy Zhadan, trans. from the Ukranian by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. Yale Univ., $26 (208p) ISBN 978-0-300-27086-0

Poet and novelist Zhadan (*The Orphanage*) delivers a wrenching, nearly day-by-day account of the first four months of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In slightly edited versions of his Facebook posts, Zhadan reflects on the stark choices faced by Ukrainians ("Withstand this war or be annihilated"); documents his travels around Kharkiv, "a city of universities" that withstood heavy shelling in the war's first weeks; reports on clashes between Ukrainian and Russian forces; and issues full-throated rallying cries: "The Russians are barbarians. They've come here to destroy our history, our culture, and our education, because all those things are alien and hostile to them. We have to protect all that, restore it, keep developing it." There are also poignant snapshots of life returning to some semblance of normalcy during breaks in the bombardment, stories of delivering food and supplies to civilians and volunteer army units, flashes of gallows humor, calls for military aid from other countries, descriptions of concerts Zhadan and his ska band held for people bunkering in the Kharkiv metro, and pained reflections on the destruction of the Skovoroda Museum and other heritage sites. Intimate, resolute, and occasionally profound, this is an inspiring account of life during wartime. Photos. *(May)*

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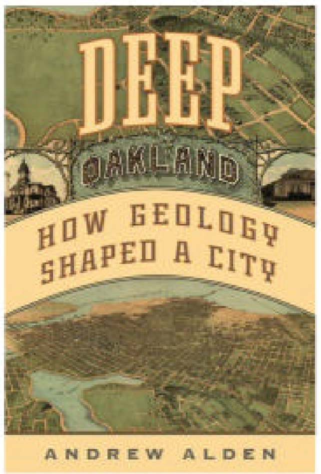
Deep Oakland: How Geology Shaped a City

Andrew Alden. Heyday, $28 (264p) ISBN 978-1-59714-596-1

Oakland, Calif.'s "unusually rich geological setting steered its history and constrains its prospects," contends geologist Alden in his niche debut. He details the ways the city's development has been shaped by its geological underpinnings, describing how the shifting of tectonic plates on the Hayward Fault that runs through the region created the Oakland Hills, which contribute to the area's cool climate by forcing oceanic breezes upward until they cool and condense into fog and rain. An examination of Lake Merritt doubles as a mini history of the city, with Alden chronicling its evolution from a swampy harbor used by Native Americans for launching rafts to a public health menace contaminated by sewage from waves of white settlers in the 1880s, and finally into a public beach and park. The author also warns of latent natural threats to the metropolis, including earthquakes and the depletion of the aquifers that supply the city's water. Despite Alden's contention that "science can be called a journey from the particular to the general," he struggles to draw larger lessons from his meticulous study, resulting in a volume with some stimulating insights into the relationship between Oakland and its environs that will hold limited appeal for anyone unfamiliar with the region. Bay Area denizens will get the most out of this. *(May)*



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The Middle Kingdoms: A New History of Central Europe

Martyn Rady. Basic, $36 (640p) ISBN 978-1-5416-1978-4

Historian Rady (*The Hapsburgs*) offers an ambitious survey of Central Europe from antiquity to the present day. Focusing on the area "now included in modern-day Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, and western Romania," with forays into "the territory of today's Ukraine, Croatia, Switzerland, and the Baltic states," Rady draws succinct, clear distinctions between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, among other social, religious, ethnic, and political influences, and stuffs the narrative with valuable context and vivid character sketches. For example, he notes that 16th-century religious reformer Martin Luther wrote his "scabrous and funny" sermons to be read aloud, since fewer than one in 10 Germans was literate at the time, and that before Otto von Bismarck became chancellor of the German Empire in 1871, "the only personal ambition he disclosed was to drink in his lifetime ten thousand bottles of champagne." Rady also introduces readers to lesser-known figures, including 19th-century Hungarian-Croatian politician Charles Khuen-Héderváry. At times, Rady's exploration of key events, including the 1968 Prague Spring and its crushing by Soviet troops, feels somewhat cursory, but he covers a vast swath of geographical and chronological ground, and his evocative prose renders this complex history accessible. It's a boon for anyone seeking insights into Central Europe's influence on the modern world. *(May)*

* * *

V Is for Victory: Franklin Roosevelt's American Revolution and the Triumph of World War II

Craig Nelson. Scribner, $28 (448p) ISBN 978-1-982122-91-1

Historian Nelson (*Rocket Men*) claims in this comprehensive and colorful account that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal kicked off a third American Revolution that pulled the nation out of the Great Depression and tipped the scales toward Allied victory in WWII. As Adolf Hitler's rise to power unsettled the world, Roosevelt became convinced that the "full-throttle unleashing of American enterprise" was the secret weapon to defeating Nazi Germany. New Deal programs such as the National Recovery Administration gave corporate and government managers experiences working together that were critical to organizing the war effort and laid the groundwork for the American corporate profits to double between 1941 and 1945. In addition to thoroughly debunking Roosevelt's anti-business reputation, Nelson details how William Knudsen, Henry Ford, and other corporate leaders turned their factories into assembly lines churning out ships, planes, and tanks, and notes that Chrysler produced "more tanks from one Detroit factory than the Nazis produced over the whole of the war." Light is also shed on the lend-lease and cash-and-carry programs that helped supply Britain and France with military equipment before the U.S. entered the war. Deeply researched and fluidly written, this is a rousing portrait of the partnership between America's public and private sectors firing on all cylinders. *(May)*

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★ The Land of Hope and Fear: Israel's Battle for Its Inner Soul

Isabel Kershner. Knopf, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-1-101-94676-3

In this masterful study, *New York Times* correspondent Kershner (*Barrier*) enriches her analysis of the forces roiling modern Israel through incisive conversations with individual Israelis. Shifting the focus from Israel's territorial conflicts with its Arab neighbors to domestic issues, Kershner reveals how the unequal treatment of Jewish immigrants from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Russia, and other parts of the world, coupled with the failure of the Oslo Peace Accords, fostered deep-seated resentments against the political establishment and contributed to the rise of the right wing in Israel. Elsewhere, she documents grievances against the ultra-Orthodox community, who sometimes receive privileged treatment from politicians despite their opposition to obligatory military service and other polices; talks with members of Israel's Arab minority about "the self-contradiction of being an Arab citizen of the Jewish state"; and contends that prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has willfully inflamed ethnic tensions for political gains. Striking an ominous note, Kershner warns that Israel's "demographic trajectory," which has it on track to become "one of the most crowded countries on earth," will strain the country's already faltering infrastructure and exacerbate "the rise of the political fringes and the threats to liberal democracy." Nuanced and persuasive, this is a valuable dispatch from a country in turmoil. *(May)*

Marvel Comics in the 1970s: The World Inside Your Head

Eliot Borenstein. Cornell Univ., $23.95 trade paper (282p) ISBN 978-1-5017-6936-8

Borenstein (*Plots Against Russia*), a Russian and Slavic studies professor at New York University, delivers an entertaining exploration of Marvel's turn inward during the 1970s. He contends that over the course of the decade, Marvel authors—namely Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, Don McGregor, Doug Moench, and Marv Wolfman—developed a style "focused intensely on the inner lives of the characters on the page." Englehart, Borenstein suggests, bucked Marvel's editorial mandate that characters can never fundamentally change and depicted character growth through introspection, as shown in his narratives in which Doctor Strange must explore his "ego in order to move beyond it." Other innovations included Moench's use of first person narrative captions to get inside the minds of such characters as the Werewolf and Deathlok, as well as the existentialist musings that Gerber wove into his Howard the Duck comics, which used the anthropomorphic character to offer an outsider's disenchanted perspective on the human condition. Theory-driven discussions of Fredric Jameson's and Umberto Eco's writings on science fiction and superheroes give this academic heft, though lay readers will still have plenty of fun with Borenstein's thoughtful close readings of Spider-Man and Fantastic Four comics. Marvel connoisseurs willing to put up with some light scholarly jargon will appreciate the insightful takes on a pivotal era in the publisher's history. Illus. *(May)*

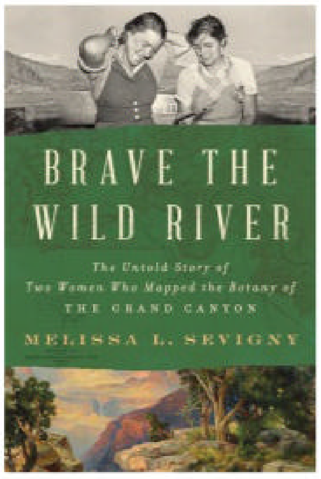
Unlikeable Female Characters: The Women Pop Culture Wants You to Hate

Anna Bogutskaya. Sourcebooks, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-72827-474-4

This sharp debut by Bogutskaya, a film programmer for the Edinburgh International Film Festival, examines how gender norms affect the reception of female characters and celebrities. Likability, Bogutskaya argues, is a proxy for how much a woman conforms with traditional femininity, and she explores media depictions of women who break social expectations, outlining nine types of "unlikeable women" that include "the bitch," "the mean girl," and "the trainwreck." On "the shrew," she suggests that the virulent hatred *Breaking Bad* fans directed at character Skyler White stemmed from her failure to passively "stand by" her drug lord husband's immoral exploits.

★ Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon

Melissa L. Sevigny. Norton, $30 (304p) ISBN 978-0-393-86823-4


BRAVE THE WILD RIVER
The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon
MELISSA L. SEVIGNY

In this marvelous history, science journalist Sevigny (*Mythical River*) recounts the 43-day rowboat trip down the Colorado River undertaken by University of Michigan botanist Elzada Clover and her mentee Lois Jotter during the summer of 1938. Sevigny details how the duo successfully catalogued the flora of the Grand Canyon while enduring raging rapids, "stomach-somersaulting drops, and standing waves big enough to swallow a boat whole," but her focus is on how Clover and Jotter refuted sexist assumptions about the role of women in science. Though historically botany had been deemed too feminine for men, Clover and Jotter undertook their expedition at a time when male scientists were becoming increasingly involved in the field and began excluding women (a well-known adventurer remarked, "Women... do not belong in the Canyon of the Colorado"). Sevigny also weaves in stimulating trivia on the natural history of the Grand Canyon, including explanations of the geological forces behind its formation and National Park Service efforts to repopulate native animals in the region. Drawing on Clover and Jotter's journals and letters, Sevigny recreates their expedition in novelistic detail, producing a narrative as propulsive as the current of the Colorado. Readers will be swept away. Photos. *(May)*

The author contends that the conservative backlash to the explicit sexuality of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's song "WAP" demonstrates that, even though "Western visual culture has been shaped around profiting off images of female beauty," women are expected to downplay their own sexual desires at risk of being deemed a "slut." Other chapters on *Mean Girls* villain Regina George, Marquise de Merteuil from *Dangerous Liaisons*, and Fleabag from the show of the same name serve up bracing critiques of how audiences' sexism boxes in female characters and how women artists have pushed back against restrictive tropes. The result is a fresh feminist appraisal of the pop culture canon. *(May)*

Pragmatism

John R. Shook. MIT, $16.95 trade paper (296p) ISBN 978-0-26254-461-0

Shook (*Dewey's Social Philosophy*), a professor of philosophy at Bowie State University, scrutinizes pragmatism in this accessible intellectual history. Though pragmatism's "ideas travel everywhere," Shook points out that the philosophical movement has American origins and is most frequently associated with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, a loose triumvirate of 19th- and 20th-century polymaths who sought to explain "how thinking and knowing undergo modifications and develop over time." Dismissing ideas of "pure ideality untainted by materiality," pragmatists define knowledge, truth, and morality as the product of the interaction of biology and culture. This view has become so widespread in the modern world to almost be taken for granted, according to Shook, who notes that pragmatism has applications in countless fields other than philosophy: the first electronic logic computer was constructed by a student of pragmatism in 1886, and pragmatic theories of mind have been applied to such fields as psychology and social evolutionary biology. Shook also examines what pragmatism has to say about key philosophical preoccupations, including morality ("There is nothing about humanity... that is irredeemably irrational or immune from improvement") and the nature of reality ("fluctuating, pluralistic, holistic, interdependent, and dynamic"). The book's solid structure, helpful glossary, and discerning list of further readings make it a worthwhile resource for newcomers. Philosophy students will want to check this out. *(May)*

Abortion: A Personal Story, a Political Choice

Pauline Harmange, trans. from the French by Caitlin O'Neil. Scribe US, $16 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-957363-29-5

In this nuanced account, Harmange (*I Hate Men*) reflects on her decision to have an abortion. She recounts how in 2019, she became pregnant despite using birth control and aborted the embryo because though she wanted to one day be a mother, her circumstances were "less-than-ideal" as a recent college graduate still struggling to launch a career. "There was no doubt and no regret," she reports, but admits she had complicated emotions, waiting over a year to tell her mother out of shame and grieving "who I'd thought I was." She uses her story as a launching pad to explore the politics of abortion and laments that taboo inhibits frank discussion of the "feelings of ambiguity, negativity, sadness, and insecurity" that can accompany the procedure. Examining the role of men, she posits that their stunted emotional "vocabulary" regarding abortion is exacerbated by the "fact that women still don't have the right to talk about it freely." Harmange excels at illuminating intersections between the personal and the political, and her willingness to probe her own pain makes for powerful reading. Timely and affecting, this packs a punch. *(May)*

A Trans Man Walks into a Gay Bar

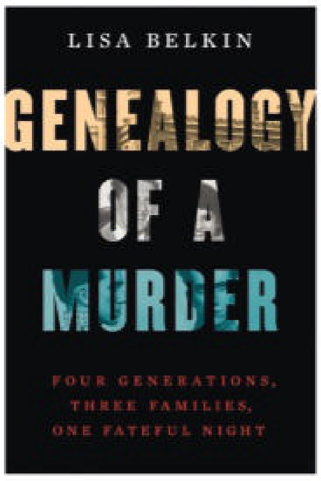
Harry Nicholas. Jessica Kingsley, $18.95 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-83997-183-9

In this vulnerable and frequently amusing memoir, trans activist Nicholas recalls growing up as a girl who "everyone assumed" was a lesbian and trying "really, really, really hard" to be one, despite his attraction for men. He began hormonal therapy and had top surgery while dating his long-term girlfriend, Lucy, and after she broke up with him in 2018, Nicholas realized that he "needed to allow myself the chance to experience being gay," despite not knowing whether he would be accepted in the gay community as a trans man. Though heavy topics such as body dysphoria, transphobia, and sexual assault are discussed, Nicholas's self-deprecating humor shines as he recounts coming out to his parents, meeting men on Grindr, visiting gay saunas, and looking for a long-term partner. His journey culminates in the difficult realization that the only way forward is to dispel the fear that the world may not accept him by learning to accept himself: "It is one of my proudest accomplishments to be able to read my own reflection of me and enjoy what I see.... This is not the body that I was born with; it has been made, created, sculpted. It is intentional. It is magic." Funny, candid, and smart, this is an important contribution to the understanding of what it means to be gay and trans. *(May)*

★ Genealogy of a Murder: Four Generations, Three Families, One Fateful Night

Lisa Belkin. Norton, $29.95 (416p) ISBN 978-0-393-28525-3

Journalist Belkin (*Life's Work*) goes deep on a tragic 1960 shooting in this outstanding true crime saga. From primary sources including diaries, letters, autobiographies, and her own interviews, Belkin retraces the steps that led ex-convict Joseph DeSalvo to kill Stamford, Conn., beat cop David Troy during a bar holdup. At the time, DeSalvo was on parole from an armed robbery sentence, during which he became friendly with a doctor named Alvin Tarlov, who conducted experiments on inmates where DeSalvo was housed. Tarlov had faith that DeSalvo was rehabilitated and supported his release, paving the way for his deadly confrontation with Troy. After meticulously detailing the crime, Belkin flashes back to trace several generations of the Troy, Tarlov, and DeSalvo families, each of whom emigrated from Europe starting in 1906. She invites readers to wonder whether, had



their ancestors taken different paths, the trio might have wound up in a less deadly place. Belkin's judicious research parlays into an engrossing, expansive narrative that reads like a real-life Greek tragedy. It will spur contemplation and debate in an audience far beyond just true crime diehards. *(May)*

The Search: Finding Meaningful Work in a Post-career World

Bruce Feiler. Penguin Press, $29 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-593-29891-6

Americans are fed narrow, outdated notions of what work means—9 to 5 days, climbing the corporate ladder, dreams of bigger offices and higher salaries—argues TV personality Feiler (*Life Is in the Transitions*) in this energetic challenge to status quo notions of success. After taking in the disruptions wrought on work culture by the pandemic, Feiler embarked on a "Work Story Project" in which he interviewed people across the country to discover what makes jobs meaningful. He found that most people reported having more than one job, and that definitions of success are highly individual and based on a "work narrative" rooted in personal beliefs, experiences, and lessons. Since people can be unaware of their work narrative, he suggests conducting a "meaning audit"—surveying past, present, and future priorities and perspectives—in order to assume control of the story. As well, Feiler discusses harnessing "workquakes," or moments of professional disruption, to initiate soul-searching, and the importance of allowing oneself permission to enact a life change; he supports his arguments with examples of those who overcame difficulties to find fulfilling careers. While the abundance of anecdotes sometimes crowds out Feiler's advice, his down-to-earth delivery and emphasis on individual agency will resonate with readers seeking direction. Those at professional crossroads will benefit. *(May)*

Attraction, Love, Sex: The Inside Story

Simon LeVay. Columbia Univ., $32 (296p)
ISBN 978-0-231-20450-7

"Why have sex?" asks neuroscientist LeVay (*Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why*) in this stimulating survey of the science of sexual desire. Admitting that there's no

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH LISA BELKIN

Paths to a Tragedy

In *Genealogy of a Murder* (Norton, May; reviewed on p. 70), journalist Belkin retraces the choices and chances that culminated in the 1960 murder of a Connecticut cop.

When did the seed for this book get planted?

Over breakfast in my mother's kitchen with her brand-new husband in Tucson, Ariz., in 2014. My new stepdad, Alvin Tarlov, read my previous book, *Show Me a Hero*, and it reminded him of a story. It was the story of his interaction with a prisoner in 1960, and his attempts while conducting medical tests in that prisoner's facility to help the man get back into society. It went terribly wrong, and it ended up with the murder of a cop. I said, "You know I have to write about this, right?"

© CAROLINE SAFRAN

You spent close to a decade writing about it. What kept you interested for so long?

What fascinated me was that my stepdad and the cop [David Troy] and this ex-prisoner [Joseph DeSalvo] all basically started at the same starting line. They all were the children of immigrant families who came to the U.S. for the same reasons. It's been a lifelong fascination of mine: how do we become who we are? And this became a way to tell that. How did one become the cop, one become the killer, and one become my stepfather, who inadvertently set this fatal shooting in motion?

Your stepfather has had half a century to think about his vouching for DeSalvo. How does he feel about that choice today?

It's complicated. After DeSalvo was released, he reached out to my stepfather on a day when his wife was having an emotional breakdown. Alvin had to choose: does he go see his newly released friend, or does he take his wife to the beach to get her away? He chose his wife, and it was during that time that DeSalvo bought a gun, and that led to the holdup, and that led to the murder. Alvin's view is that he would still have worked to get this man paroled, but also worked to provide more scaffolding for DeSalvo once he got out of prison.

How do notorious murderers Leopold and Loeb factor into your narrative?

Leopold and Loeb were imprisoned for life, and they bet on whether people who were released were going to come back to the prison. They were right a lot of the time, and they started to ask why. They ended up with a theory, published in various sociological journals—under a pseudonym, because these two murderers could not publish in journals—predicting who would make good on parole and who wouldn't. Their research led to the development of a questionnaire that became the de facto way of determining parole eligibility in Illinois, and it's what led to the release of Joe DeSalvo before he shot David Troy.

—LENNY PICKER

simple answer, he explores the perspectives and research of neuroscientists, evolutionary biologists, and sociologists on why people are attracted to who they're attracted to. Studies push back on common assumptions; for instance, LeVay notes there's little evidence for the belief that men have more sexual kinks than women, who, according to a 2022 study, act on their kinks more privately than men. Other research baffles, such as the study that suggested hungry heterosexual men are more likely than men who are full to find women with high BMIs attractive. LeVay explores theories on sexual orientation and concludes that it "can be best understood in terms of biological processes," specifically the way in which sex hormones affect the brain during prenatal development. Some will bristle at LeVay's more provocative claims, as when his biological view of sexual orientation leads him to argue that because pedophiles can't be "cured," pedophiles "who have committed themselves not to offend sexually against children... deserve admiration and support" in trying to cope with desires that cause harm. Nonetheless, LeVay's evenhanded approach carefully outlines uncertainties in the scientific literature while serving up surprising findings. Though there are some controversial points, this nonetheless sheds light on a fundamental part of human life. *(May)*

The Good Enough Job: Reclaiming Life from Work

Simone Stolzoff. Portfolio, $28 (272p) ISBN 978-0-593-53896-8

"Our livelihoods have become our lives," warns business consultant Stolzoff in his solid debut. Profiling eight white-collar workers (they're "the most likely to work for meaning and identity")—including an investment banker, a librarian, and a software engineer—Stolzoff uses their stories to examine how Americans have come to rely on their jobs to give their lives meaning. He cautions readers against tying one's identity to one's employment and illustrates the danger of doing so by telling of a young chef's devastation after her mentor pushed her out of the dairy-free alternatives company she founded under his tutelage and had devoted her life to. Discussing how a marketing consultant overworked himself to the point of burnout only to lose out on an anticipated promotion, the author observes that working more doesn't always pay off. To decenter work, Stolzoff supports universal basic income (which decouples "our human needs from our employment status"), encourages companies to implement mandatory paid time off, and recommends that readers view work as only a means to earn enough money to live on. The author's personal anecdotes sometimes drag on and distract from the profiles, but his straight-shooting style makes for a blistering takedown of American corporate culture. Workaholics would do well to check this out. *(May)*

Lifestyle

Food & Cooking

Mostly Veggies: Easy Make-Ahead Meals for Healthy Living

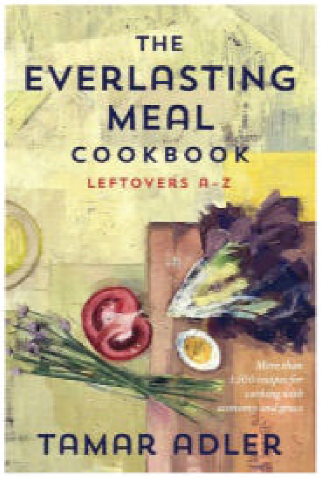
Brittany Mullins. Voracious, $30 (272p) ISBN 978-0-316-42792-0

Eating Bird Food blogger Mullins's practical vegetarian debut makes "plant-forward" cooking varied, tasty, and easy through meal planning and prepping. She opens with four sample weekly meal plans, one for each season, alongside shopping lists and "make ahead" tips, but if batch-cooking quinoa and prepping veggies on Sunday isn't one's thing, Mullins's framework is adaptable; each of the 101 recipes features both "serve immediately" and meal prep instructions along with storing and reheating tips. An extensive breakfast chapter includes homemade instant oatmeal packets, as well as veggie quiche with sweet potato crust, and PB&J yogurt jars. Chapters on satiating salads, bowl meals, and sheet-pan suppers deliver a varied mélange of vegetables and grains in dishes from across the globe, among them cauliflower tikka masala, thai lentil meatballs, jerk chickpeas with sweet plantains, and butternut squash and black bean enchiladas. Lively introductions and well-styled photographs invite readers to explore, from trying a "game-changing" way of cooking spaghetti squash to subbing jackfruit for pulled pork. Snacks, treats (brownie hummus, anyone?), and a handful of kid-friendly recipes round things out. Busy home chefs looking to expand their vegetarian repertoire and streamline effort will find much to inspire them. *Agent: Jan Baumer, Folio Literary Management. (Apr.)*

★ The Everlasting Meal Cookbook: Leftovers A–Z

Tamar Adler. Scribner, $32.50 (528) ISBN 978-1-4767-9966-7

James Beard Award winner Adler presents an impressive encyclopedia of recipes for elevated but frugal and environmentally friendly eating. Building on her 2012 essay collection *An Everlasting Meal*, she offers more than 1,500 recipes intended to reduce food waste by giving new life to everything from wilted cucumbers and old garlic to leftover escargot. For Adler, unused ingredients and remainders are an opportunity, and her philosophy proves infectious. Cores and leaves of cabbages and cauliflowers, for example, are not to be squandered; instead prepare an "any vegetable" sabzi or minestra. Cube leftover Halloumi and fry with olives, chili flakes, and herbs. Rewarm fried oysters and add them to a Remoulade-sauced omelet. What to do with leftover guanciale ends? Make classic pasta All'Amatriciana. And for something sweet, stale cookie crumbles get a chocolate-covered makeover as "cookie clusters." Recipes run the gamut in international flavor profiles, techniques, and sophistication, occasionally requiring some harder-to-source ingredients (fenugreek, eel, pokeberries). There are also plenty of practical, family-friendly options, and it's this range that really sets the book apart. Adler's thorough guide will inspire all levels of cooks to say goodbye to waste and embrace the ABCs of leftovers. *Agent: Kari Stuart, CAA. (Mar.)*



The Edible Flower: A Modern Guide to Growing, Cooking and Eating Edible Flowers

Erin Bunting and Jo Facer. Laurence King, $40 (304p) ISBN 978-0-85782-949-8

Bunting and Facer, cofounders of the

Edible Flower catering company and supper club, debut with a graceful collection of gardening tips (from Facer) and recipes (from Bunting). After a primer on gardening best practices, each plant variety is treated to an encyclopedia-style listing with instructions for growing and harvesting, as well as each plant's flowering season, dos and don'ts, and a brief on flavor, followed by recipes using the blossoms, and occasionally other plant parts as well. (Nasturtium seeds, for instance, are pickled into "flavor bombs" that can sub in for capers.) The aesthetics are charming: zucchini blossoms brighten a zucchini and cream cheese puff-pastry tart, and marigold petals transform ribbons of pasta into works of art. Hearty flavors balance the dreamy look: Vietnamese-style spring rolls incorporate pork and shrimp under delicate purple blossoms, and spicy Thai beef is served in tulip petals. Sweets including a Pavlova with rose petals, lilac panna cotta, and a four-layer cake adorned with pressed flowers are highlights. Handy sidebars on subjects such as drying flowers and collecting the seeds of annuals are a thoughtful inclusion and add real utility. Cooking (and especially baking) with flowers is increasingly trendy, and this is a solid introduction to the topic. *(Mar.)*

Bao: The Cookbook

Erchen Chang, Shing Tat Chung, and Wai Ting Chung. Phaidon, $29.95 (240p) ISBN 978-1-83866-620-0

The stylish and appetizing debut from the creative minds behind London's Bao restaurants is part cookbook and part manifesto. Each chapter centers on a different Bao location, detailing the inspiration behind the restaurant and offering insight into the chefs' upbringings in Taiwan and London. The result is an engaging mix of food and culture, enhanced by concept artwork from Chang and a host of tantalizing photos. Dishes are wide-ranging and include sweet potato chips with pickled plum ketchup from the flagship Soho location, half-roasted chili chicken with aged white soy in the bar-style Bao Fitz, glazed tofu and Taiwanese pickles at the grill house Bao Borough, fried prawn rolls from the Taiwanese café Bao King's Cross, and Kelp soup noodles with aubergine tempura at Bao Noodle Shop. The authors also showcase myriad varieties of bao, the steamed buns that give the restaurants their name. Unctuous braised or confit pork belly, black cod, short ribs, fried chicken, and even ice cream become drool-worthy bao fillings. A tasty array of drinks round things out. This impressive outing perfectly encapsulates Bao's ethos. *(Mar.)*

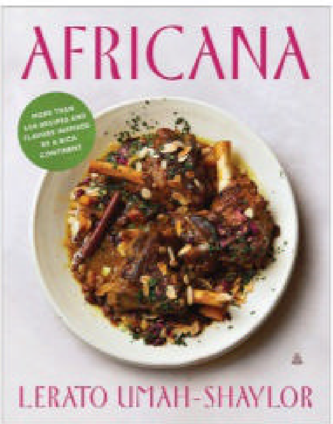
Recipe for Disaster

Alison Riley. Chronicle, $27.95 (176p) ISBN 978-1-79721-282-1

Debut author Riley brings together a star-studded but lackluster anthology of 40 essays and recipes responding to the prompt, "Can you name a low point, of any size and shape, and the food memory you associate with surviving it?" The responses tend to be fairly mild—only notable because famous people are relaying them—and the recipes themselves range wildly from the low-effort (writer Samantha Irby's "Rejection Chicken," a casual curry which includes "unfollow your ex on social media" as one of its instructions) to the rather involved (restaurateurs Hannah Black and Carla Perez-Gallardo's squid ink paella, which they served on a memorable New Year's Eve to a party they later realized were tripping on mushrooms). Other contributors include comedian Chelsea Peretti, who delivers a pesto to cut through depression; record producer Bob Power, who recounts the high-end meal he enjoyed while waiting for the 2016 election results and then offers an unrelated cauliflower recipe; actor Bowen Yang, who expounds on his childhood love of dry mapo tofu; and writer Laurie Woolever, who relays a moving story of eating scrambled eggs while mourning her mentor, Anthony Bourdain, but then includes an unremarkable scrambled egg recipe. The essays just aren't strong enough to bolster the recipes—and vice versa. *(Mar.)*

★ Africana: More Than 100 Recipes and Flavors Inspired by a Rich Continent

Lerato Umah-Shaylor. Amistad, $38 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06-327749-6



Nigerian British culinary instructor and TV personality Umah-Shaylor debuts with an irresistible introduction to pan-African fusion fare. Shakshuka, originally Tunisian, becomes a "marriage of North and West African flavors" by adding chunks of fried plantains to the pot of simmering tomatoes, onion, peppers, and egg. Umah-Shaylor also gives the meaty South African casserole bobotie a vegan makeover with lentils, mushrooms, spices, and dried fruits, and streamlines the process of making injera bread with a shortcut involving vinegar and a brief ferment. A comprehensive guide to the "African pantry" primes readers on ingredients such as selim pepper, Calabash nutmeg, and baobab powder. Umah-Shaylor makes an impressive case for the versatility of these ingredients: hibiscus syrup, for example, is delicious in salad dressings, on glazed popcorn, and as a topper for chocolate-orange cake. Home cooks with an appetite for food heritage and kitchen adventure will appreciate this passionate and welcoming exploration of tastes from across Africa. *(Mar.)*

Health & Fitness

Hot and Bothered: What No One Tells You About Menopause and How to Feel Like Yourself Again

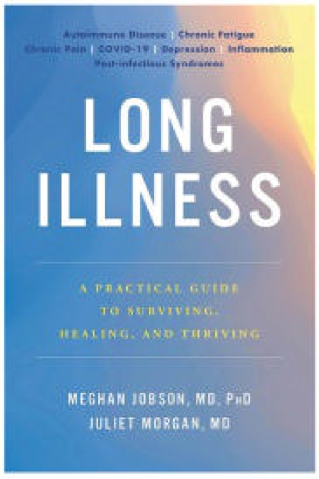
Jancee Dunn. Putnam, $28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-54256-9

This astute guide by essayist Dunn (*How Not to Hate Your Husband After Kids*) digs into what to expect from menopause. "How is it that I never had a single conversation about a life transition that lasts for years?" Dunn asks, laying out the scientific background she wished she had known when she transitioned into menopause. She recounts scrambling to set up fans to disguise her profuse sweating from a hot flash during a Zoom interview and explains that hot flashes are likely caused by sharp drops in estrogen levels that make the brain sensitive to temperature changes and induce sweating to cool the body down. The brain, she writes, is "impacted by menopause as much as your ovaries are"; for instance, menopausal memory lapses and mood swings are caused by waning estrogen levels in the brain. Dunn explores remedies for symptoms and recommends that readers try CBD for insomnia and take a probiotic with lactobacillus to alleviate vaginal dryness. The lighthearted tone keeps things upbeat ("I'm the melting face emoji come to life," she writes of a hot flash), and the suggestions are practical and sensible. Premenopausal and perimenopausal women will appreciate this witty and informative resource. *(May)*

Long Illness: A Practical Guide to Surviving, Healing, and Thriving

Meghan Jobson and Juliet Morgan. Hachette Go, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-0-306-82874-4

"Recovery is a process, not always a destination," contend physicians Jobson and Morgan in their comprehensive program for managing a prolonged illness. The authors detail how to build a care team and manage symptoms for a variety of "rheumatologic, autoimmune, neurologic, and inflammatory" conditions; outline the four types of pain doctors consider when planning treatment (nociceptive pain arises from tissue damage, while complaints of pins and needles imply neuropathic pain, or nerve damage); and cover the gamut of possible remedies, including low-tech (deep breathing and meditation), therapeutic (acupuncture, physical therapy), and pharmacological (methadone and tricyclic antidepressants). Chronic fatigue, they note, can be caused by such factors as hormone imbalance or autoimmune dysfunction, and they recommend cognitive behavioral therapy or getting tested for a common genetic mutation that makes it difficult for the body to draw energy from vitamin B. The authors also offer advice on managing one's medical team and provide a script for what readers might say to practitioners if they're not feeling heard. Though the chapters on depression and anxiety feel meager, Jobson and Morgan otherwise succeed in addressing the broad scope of possible conditions while offering specific, useful suggestions. Those dealing with long-term illness will be grateful for the practical advice. *(May)*


Autoimmune Disease | Chronic Fatigue
Chronic Pain | COVID-19 | Depression | Inflammation
Post-infectious Syndromes
LONG ILLNESS
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SURVIVING, HEALING, AND THRIVING
MEGHAN JOBSON, MD, PhD
JULIET MORGAN, MD

The Wellness Trap: Break Free from Diet Culture, Disinformation, and Dubious Diagnoses, and Find Your True Well-Being

Christy Harrison. Little, Brown Spark, $29 (336p) ISBN 978-0-316-31560-9

"Wellness culture is a trap, keeping us stuck in a narrow view of what it means to be well and exposing us to much that is harmful," contends nutritionist Harrison (*Anti-Diet*) in this incisive takedown. She surveys the dangers posed by the alternative medicine industry, including the largely unregulated vitamin and supplement market, restrictive diets that can induce disordered eating, and Western practitioners' superficial commodification of such traditional Eastern healing disciplines as yoga or Ayurveda. Harrison situates contemporary wellness purveyors in the tradition of 19th-century snake oil salesmen and posits that both exploit medical uncertainties to lure desperate patients into buying products that don't work. Proposing smart and wide-ranging solutions, she advocates for legislation to ameliorate the social determinants of ill health and calls on readers to evaluate potential misinformation by following the SIFT formula: stop, investigate the source, find better coverage, and trace claims to their original source. The historical perspective elevates Harrison's analysis, and her empathy for those who fall for disinformation yields illuminating insight (getting into wellness culture, she writes, "starts with feeling disappointed, unheard, or excluded by the Western medical system"). This is an ideal companion for those disillusioned by the medical establishment. *(Apr.)*

Hobbies & Crafts

Kaffe Fassett's Timeless Themes: 23 New Quilts Inspired by Classic Patterns

Kaffe Fassett, with Liza Prior Lucy. Abrams, $40 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4197-6140-9

Textile designer Fassett (*Kaffe Fassett in the Studio*) delivers a vibrant if advanced manual for making quilts. Exploring the inspirations behind fabrics he's designed, Fassett describes how his striped boro pattern draws on the indigo patches that Japanese farmers once used to mend their thinning clothing, and he credits the flower arrangements in English gardens as "a great instructor on the power of color" for his floral designs. The author explains how to incorporate his fabrics into bed covers, suggesting that readers get "as many leafy prints as you can" to make his "Salad Days" quilt, which uses pastel-hued textiles featuring various kinds of plants and leaves. Standouts include a quilt made from concentric rectangles with beach balls, oranges, and poppies on them; the psychedelic "sunrise" quilt composed of dozens of small diamond-shaped patches; and the "organic seahorses" quilt made out of triangular pieces arranged into a shape loosely resembling a seahorse. The instructions are straightforward but assume the reader has a solid background in sewing, and though the intricate projects dazzle, they'll likely challenge novice and even some intermediate quilters. Rewarding if demanding, the eye-popping designs are hard to beat. *(Apr.)*

Religion/Spirituality

Faith and Fake News: A Guide to Consuming Information Wisely

Rachel I. Wightman. Eerdmans, $19.99 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-0-80288-245-5

Librarian Wightman debuts with a practical guide to help Christians navigate what's true and what's not on the internet. Though fake news isn't new—Wightman cites instances of misinformation and rumors in the Bible—the internet's ability to allow it to spread far and fast requires one to be able to effectively evaluate information and its sources. Wightman offers an array of tools for doing so, from using fact-checking websites to "lateral reading" (researching the content's

FAITH
&
FAKE
NEWS
A Guide to Consuming Information Wisely
RACHEL I. WIGHTMAN

creator and credentials for context before using the information). She also urges readers to monitor their emotional states before attempting to discern what's true and what's false, as they may be more likely to spread misinformation when affected by negative or angry feelings. The author wades into related social challenges sparked by the online world, such as whether to engage in-person with loved ones who believe conspiracy theories (it's important to approach these conversations with love and connect with God for guidance first, Wightman advises). While much of the advice boils down to common sense, Christians will particularly appreciate the author's concrete tips—before talking to someone about misinformation, it's important to determine one's desired goal, whether it's expressing personal values, or trying to spur that person to change. Christians overwhelmed by the media landscape should take a look. *(June)*

* * *

The Tibetan Book of the Dead for Beginners: A Guide to Living and Dying

Lama Lhanang Rinpoche and Mordy Levine. Sounds True, $18.99 trade paper (112p) ISBN 978-1-64963-132-9

Buddhist teacher Lhanang and Levine, creator of the Meditation Pro video series, deliver a slim but insightful take on the classic Buddhist text on dying well. Composed in the eighth century by Buddhist master Padmasambhava, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* addresses end-of-life concerns but can prove inaccessible to the non-Buddhist. In this entry, the authors spotlight its central principles and recast them for a broader audience. Lhanang and Levine trace the life-death-birth cycle and discuss the importance of cultivating positive karma during life, which becomes "embedded in our consciousness" and remains there after death as one moves into a "transition state" before rebirth. It's also important to exhibit compassion and wisdom in order to "transform our mind" and approach death with peace, they explain. As well, the authors suggest ways of helping as loved ones' deaths approach, including maintaining a peaceful, quiet environment, and listening nonjudgmentally to dying wishes.

[Q&A]

PW Talks with Tasha Jun

Identity and Intergenerational Trauma

Jun navigates her faith, heritage, and family in her memoir *Tell Me the Dream Again* (Tyndale Momentum, May; reviewed on p. 76).

You write about feeling nameless sadness as a child but only later figuring out it was grief. Was that a motivator for writing this book?

The grief was something I carried for so long, and I didn't have words for it until I started writing. That's when I began to process it, and realized this is a sadness that's very connected to my mother's story. Writing it out and giving this intergenerational trauma a name in my own life has been really powerful.

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How does your faith show up in the book?

My faith journey and my journey to embrace my ethnic identity were very intertwined. Earlier in my faith and in Christian communities, I received the message, whether outright or otherwise, that the other parts of me, including my ethnicity, weren't important, and that since I was a Christian, I could now discard them. But how can I have a truthful relationship with God if I can't accept all the parts of who I am? Hitting those roadblocks was really hard, but they forced me to examine parts of myself that I wanted to hide.

In the memoir, you describe food as intimately connected to culture. Could you talk about that?

Food is so tied to the way that I experienced love from my family, but especially from my mom. But it was also a site of tension, and when I rejected my Korean heritage at certain points of my life, food bore the brunt of that. In the book I write about seaweed soup, which is a meal Korean mothers make for their kids on their birthdays, and for their daughters after they give birth. Growing up, my mom would always try to feed it to me, and I didn't know the meaning. Later in life, I found out the significance while flipping through a cookbook, and I just started crying in the middle of the bookshop, thinking about how many times I'd refused it. Food is also what welcomed me back into my Korean identity. Even in the middle of that bookstore, I felt like I was being called to come back and receive the ethnicity I'd been given.

Was there an aspect of the book that was hardest to get right?

One of the biggest challenges was telling stories that involved me and many others as truthfully as possible, with my imperfect memory. Also, in many cases, these stories are still unfolding and the people are still unfolding. It's impossible to neatly wrap up a narrative, because everything is still in motion.

—Miriam Grossman

Lhanang and Levine successfully boil down complicated Buddhist concepts without sacrificing depth or talking down to readers, who will appreciate the unpretentious guidance, prayers, and meditation suggestions. Novices will appreciate this primer to Buddhism wisdom on death. *(June)*

Disruptive Thinking: A Daring Strategy to Change How We Live, Lead, and Love

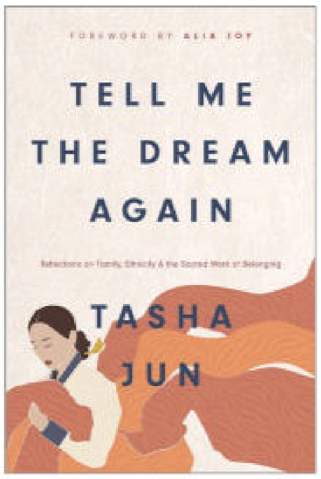
T.D. Jakes. Faithwords, $27 (272p) ISBN 978-1-5460-0400-4

"Every period of chaos brings with it a gift—an opportunity to disrupt [it]," contends bishop, musician, and entrepreneur Jakes (*Crushing*) in this energetic entry on the value of going against the grain. Jakes argues that difficult times require people to think in expansive ways; the 1960s, for example, saw explosive racial tensions and Vietnam war protests, as well as "great artistic creativity" from musicians like Jimi Hendrix. While those who counter social norms may face critics, Jakes argues, "standing up requires standing out." He clarifies how readers can decide when to "disrupt" (they must be able to devote time and emotional resources to the endeavor) and outlines internal barriers to disruptive thinking, including ego. Describing Jesus as a disrupter, Jakes notes that by washing his disciples' feet, Jesus upended leadership dynamics and "demonstrat[ed] that he was strong enough to be weak." Jakes also emphasizes that the current cultural moment is ripe for disruption and urges readers to effect social change. Despite an inclination toward stock positivity ("If you don't like the life you are living, you have the power to change it. It is inside of you"), Jakes is as charismatic as ever and bolsters his arguments with convincing personal anecdotes. The author's fans will welcome this motivating entry. *(May)*

★ Tell Me the Dream Again: Reflections on Family, Ethnicity, & the Sacred Work of Belonging

Tasha Jun. Tyndale Momentum, $22.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-496-45957-2

"I've always been caught between worlds... struggling to find a firm place to land," writes Jun of negotiating a biracial identity in this stirring debut. The daughter of a Korean mother and a white father, Jun recalls how, as a kid, she'd think of purging the fridge of kimchi before her friends came over—"Did we appear to be normal?" she'd wonder self-consciously—while also privately aching for the Korean language and traditions that had never been hers. (Her mother hadn't spoken Korean at home.) Jun's long struggle to accept her identity included traveling to Korea, where she was seen as an outsider, and navigating her fraught relationship with her mother, who slowly shared stories about a pain-filled past growing up during and after the Korean War, "bringing food to her dad in a dirt bunker [and] seeing dead bodies in the streets." In high school, Jun built a devotion to Jesus that helped her find wholeness because of her biracial identity—which she'd once thought of as both "too Asian and not Asian enough"—rather than in spite of it. Jun writes in lyrical prose, with longing simmering below the surface on almost every page—"the [Korean] language has always pulled at me like a map that promises to show the way home." This mesmerizes. *(May)*


FOREWORD BY ALIA JOY
TELL ME THE DREAM AGAIN
Reflections on Family, Ethnicity & the Sacred Work of Belonging
TASHA JUN

The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism: How the Evangelical Battle over the End Times Shaped a Nation

Daniel G. Hummel. Eerdmans, $29.99 (400p) ISBN 978-0-80287-922-6

In this comprehensive account, Hummel (*Covenant Brothers*), the director of university engagement at Christian study center Upper House, chronicles the history of dispensationalism and the "ideas, institutions, and individuals" that shaped it. Known primarily for its views of the end-times, including a belief in premillenialism (the idea that Jesus will return twice before ruling on Earth for 1,000 years), the theological system traces its roots to the 18th century, when Irish curate John Nelson Darby brought his writings to North America. Darby set out a theology that read the Bible as the story of God's "redemption of all things through... Israel and the church," reflecting a belief that hallmarked dispensationalism: the idea that Jews would be saved separately from Christians, during a "tribulation" period before Christ's earthly rule. Later, the 1909 Scofield Reference Bible, annotated by premillenialist pastor Cyrus Scofield, made the religious framework of dispensationalism accessible to laypeople. Hummel discusses how 20th-century social critic Philip Mauro coined the term *dispensationalism* as a moniker for what he felt were "wrong beliefs," and examines the system's influences on 20th-century pop culture, such as Hal Lindsey's 1970 *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Hummel leaves no stone unturned in this rigorous offering, and though his prose can get bogged down in jargon, those with a specific fasciation in end-times systems will find the detail valuable. This is well-suited to scholars of religious history. *(May)*

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FICTION

Minor Prophets *Blair Hurley.* Ig, ISBN 978-1-63246-1-490, Apr.

Refuge *Bill Campbell and Louis Netter.* Rosarium, ISBN 978-0-57839-153-3, Feb.

Silver Alert *Lee Smith.* Algonquin, ISBN 978-1-64375-241-9, Apr.

NONFICTION

The Dean of Shandong: Confessions of a Minor Bureaucrat at a Chinese University *Daniel A. Bell.* Princeton Univ., ISBN 978-0-691-24712-0, Mar.

The History of the NBA in Twelve Games: From 24 Seconds to 30,000 Three-Pointers *Sean Deveney.* Lyons, ISBN 978-1-4930-6665-0, Nov.

It. Goes. So. Fast. *Mary Louise Kelly.* Holt, ISBN 978-1-250-85985-3, Apr.

The Long Reckoning: A Story of War, Peace, and Redemption in Vietnam *George Black.* Knopf, ISBN 978-0-593-53410-6, Mar.

The *Wager*: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder *David Grann.* Doubleday, ISBN 978-0-385-53426-0, Apr.

We Heal Together *Michelle Cassandra Johnson.* Shambhala, ISBN 978-1-645-47107-3, Apr.

Children's/YA

Picture Books

★ Tap! Tap! Tap! Dance! Dance! Dance!

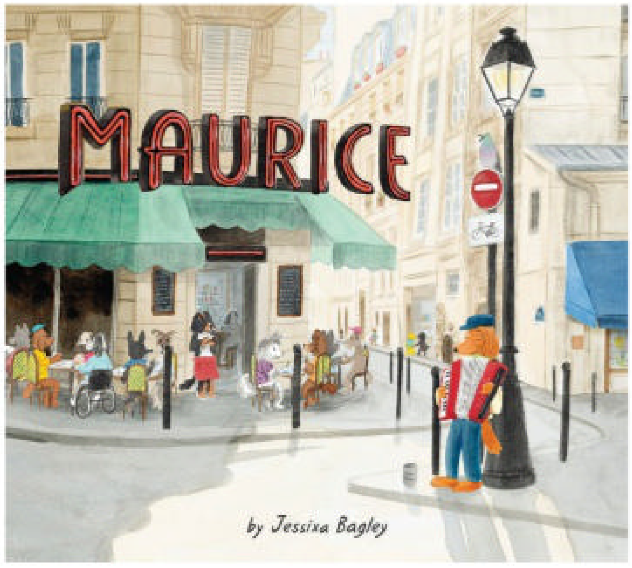
Hervé Tullet, trans. from the French by Christopher Franceschelli. Chronicle, $19.99 (64p) ISBN 978-1-79722-146-5

Furthering his explorations of ways that readers can interact with color and form in the pages of a book, Tullet (*Press Here*) uses a primary palette to create a space for dance. "Ready? Place your hand here," begins imperative text, showing a bright blue handprint on the page: "Close your eyes. Concentrate." After some preliminary warm-ups, lines instruct the reader to move across a spread: "Put your hand here, and WHOOOOSH! Circle around the page three times." Jumping, leaping, bouncing, and twirling—hands are invited to motion in ways that mimic a dancer's movements, but on a book-size stage that lends itself to back seats and waiting rooms. Swirls, scribbles, and loops of paint describe graceful bearing ("You're keeping them elegant, right?") before transitioning into wilder visuals and moves ("STOP! It freezes midair"). Calligraphic visuals have the energy of abstract expressionist paintings, and the increasing looseness of the brushstrokes, which land more splashes and blots as the pages turn, affirm the freedom of imperfection. The book's large trim size and plentiful pages offer ample time and space for joyful directed play that builds in energy as it goes. Let the dance begin. Ages 3–5. *(May)*

Sorry, Snail

Tracy Subisak. Little, Brown, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-316-53772-8

This picture book about making things right kicks off when young Ari, who reads as East Asian, storms outside upset and vents her wrath on an unsuspecting snail. "Look at that slimy body. That silly shell," she whispers. "Those tentacle eyes! I JUST CAN'T LOOK AT YOU ANYMORE, SNAIL." Leaf-munching snails might seem like oblivious targets, but, in a droll, faux-horror spread, this gastropod—Ms. Snail—arrives at Ari's bedside that night, her tentacle eyes looming over the child's face: "I request an apology." Ari's lacks conviction, and after staring into Ari's soul, Ms. Snail slimes away with a parting shot: "Apology not accepted." When the dispute escalates the next morning and an escargatoire rolls in to defend their friend in calling for "Snaily Justice," Ari feels that she's the victim. But a moment of genuine remorse over her initial behavior leads to Subisak (*This Book Is Not for You!*) showing what authentic reconciliation looks like. Shots of electric orange and deep purple, bold ink lines, and big speech balloons help deliver the message that angry words cause real and lasting harm—even when the insulter hasn't intended it—and that half-hearted apologies and defensiveness compound the problem. Ages 3–6. *Agent: Lori Kilkelly, LK Literary. (May)*



A canine accordionist plays the streets of Paris in Bagley's creativity-focused picture book (reviewed on p. 80).

Becoming Charley

Kelly DiPucchio, illus. by Loveis Wise. Knopf, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-42904-4

In this be-yourself story by DiPucchio (*Not Yeti*), Charley may look like the rest of the monarch caterpillars around him, but while the others "kept their heads down, eating, just as they'd been taught," Charley gazes dreamily up at the trees, the clouds, and the stars. His elders urge him to munch milkweed, the better to become "a big, strong butterfly," but Charley wonders about being "a spotted fawn. Or a waterfall." Part of the young caterpillars' lesson is to gaze at monarch-patterned cards so they'll know how to model themselves; Charley concentrates, instead, on wildflowers and mountains. Boldly hued digital spreads by Wise (*Magnolia Flower*) create a graphically simple caterpillar's-eye view that's loosely faithful to the natural world, highlighting monarch caterpillar coloration and the milkweed's starry compound flowers. After the chrysalises of Charley's cohort finally hatch and Charley isn't among them, a final surprise reveals his new form, which reflects the character's creativity as a young caterpillar. The idea that experiences and expectations shape creatures as they grow is gently and colorfully suggested, though, for the youngest readers, the difference between which elements are invented and which are fact may not be intuitively clear. Ages 3–7. *Agent (for author and illustrator): Steven Malk, Writers House. (May)*

The Noise Inside Boys: A Story About Big Feelings

Pete Oswald. Random House, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-48322-0

Oswald (*Sleepy Sheepy*) invites readers to consider "the noise *inside* boys" while tracing feelings' internal ebb and flow. As a white-presenting family hits the beach, the youngest sibling of three takes time constructing an ambitious sandcastle, which topples when a soccer ball sails right into the middle of it. The child stands wordless, clutching a beach towel, wind-like swirls signaling a welter of feelings before the child takes off at a run. Back home, the youth's caregiver works with the child to catalog a range of emotions in loose, light rhymes ("You might feel worried.../ or jealous.../ or mad") as corresponding, digitally finished monochrome vignettes show other scenarios: the kid fretting over schoolwork, watching others receive trophies, and experiencing taunting. Images of the child swinging a bat with confidence and dancing a ballet solo next indicate settings in which they might feel pleased with themselves. The title raises questions about gender and emotion that the text never delves into, making this a straightforward picture book primer centered on internal noticing: "Listen to your emotions—learn how to name them./ Then you'll know better how to explain them." A closing chart shows the faces of 20 children portrayed with

continued on p. 80

MEMENTO MORI

Nine picture books contemplate loss and remembrance.

The Remembering Stone

Carey Sookocheff. Groundwood, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-77306-589-2

In Sookocheff's quiet, hopeful story, a girl finds a way to remember her late grandfather after she loses the object that reminds her of him. During a classroom Show and Share, Alice, portrayed with light skin, tells her peers about the perfectly round, quarter-size stone she treasures: it holds dear memories of her grandfather, who taught her to skip stones. But when she reaches into her pocket during recess, it's gone. Her racially diverse classmates' attempts to help her find the object turn up plenty of rocks, but not hers. Back at home, her pocketful of their finds, and reflections on her peers' kindness, inspire a new way to recall her grandfather's life. Acrylic gouache and graphite images use a cool palette with lots of gray hues, while show-and-tell language reveals the story's progression and the feeling of comfort to be found in a supportive community. Ages 3–6. *(Mar.)*

A Gift of Feathers

Ken Schept, illus. by Romina Galotta. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-250-83804-9

Found feathers become a source of solace for two siblings following the death of their beloved grandmother in this remembrance-focused picture book. Via reminiscing first-person prose by Schept, Talula recounts the last visits that Talula and younger sister Rhea had with "small in size" Grandma Dot, who always greeted them with a snuggle and exclaimed, "So delicious!" Time at Grandma Dot's city apartment meant viewing the vases of special feathers that she collected as an act of memorial—"Every time I find a feather, I think about my parents watching over me," she says. When Grandma Dot dies, Talula recounts the pale-skinned, Jewish family's experience mourning and reveals the special way that she and Rhea remember their grandmother with feathers of their own. Galotta's ink, watercolor, and colored pencil art balances playful scenes of Grandma Dot and her family with grayscale images that convey a thoughtful, somber tone. An author's note concludes. Ages 3–6. *(Jan.)*

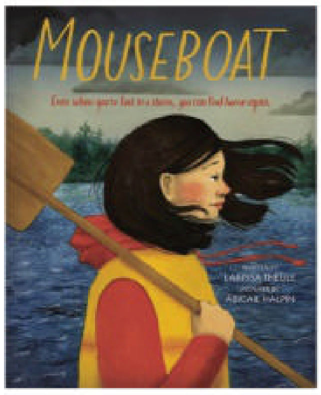
The Laugh

Fay Evans, illus. by Ayşe Klinge. Flying Eye, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-83874-082-5

A girl honors "a lady who had the loveliest laugh in the world," remembering the woman's joyful, constant presence in this moving glimpse of a child navigating loss. In cozy vignettes, the young protagonist, shown with light brown skin, plays, works, and explores the world with the lady, portrayed with light skin and auburn tresses; they're often joined by an energetic pup and an adult with dark brown skin who cues as the child's parent. The child recounts hearing the lady's laughs—by turns loud, contagious, and pretty—until visuals reveal the woman experiencing a serious illness that dims her activity, but never "the smile in her eyes." Eventually, "One day, the lady died./ And all the laughter went with her." The girl and caretaker look for the laugh, aware of the hole left behind, until, slowly, the laughter they thought was lost forever returns to their life. Evans's simple third-person text and Klinge's vivid mixed-media snapshots and portraiture convey strong emotional beats throughout. Ages 3–7. *(Mar.)*

Mouseboat

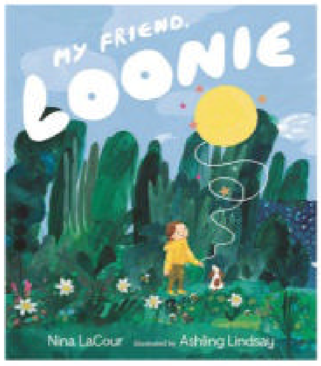
Larissa Theule, illus. by Abigail Halpin. Viking, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-32735-7



With spare, heartfelt text, Theule invites readers into a narrating child's deepest feelings about missing their deceased mother and finding a way to feel at home again after her death. As the child and their father, who read as East Asian, arrive at their home near water's edge, the child suggests that their mother's voice on the wind can't be understood, and expresses a yearning ("The quilt you made smells like you.// ... Dad does everything different"). When emotional searching keeps sleep at bay, the child races out of the house to take the small craft labeled "Faye & Mama's Mouseboat" out onto the water, despite an approaching storm. Adrift in the wind, spray, and thunder, a line reveals the previously missing presence ("You're here!"), which gives way to the comforting, longed-for voice and reassuring words. Halpin's crisp mixed-media art depicts a lush green woodland and brilliant blue water that shimmers, roils, laps, and crashes in dramatic scenes that mimic the child's emotional journey. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

My Friend, Loonie

Nina LaCour, illus. by Ashling Lindsay. Candlewick, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5362-1393-5



A big, bright yellow balloon represents beats of friendship and mourning in LaCour's tender, well-paced tale. From the moment a girl's parents, a queer-presenting couple, bring the balloon home, "Loonie" floats easily into her heart and daily routines: "She set a place for Loonie at the dinner table and made sure Loonie saw all the pages of their bedtime story." The child loves the bobbing object, dancing with it and taking it on walks until Loonie breaks away, growing "smaller and smaller in the sky." The girl's parents invite her to channel her sadness into gardening, which soon bears colorful fruit that brings warm memories of Loonie flooding back, along with a new joy at seeing "yellow in places she'd never noticed before." The pages capture the very real emotional weight that children can attach to inanimate objects in this gentle introduction to loss. The family is portrayed with light skin. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

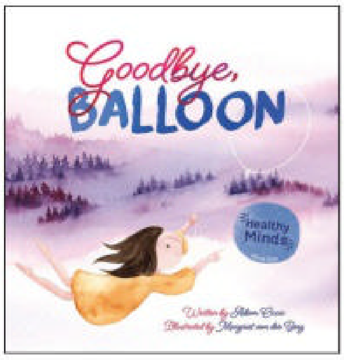
Bravo, Little Bird!

Annie Silvestro, illus. by Ramona Kaulitzki. S&S/Wiseman, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-66590-692-0

The favorite tunes and kind spirit of a talented pianist live on after his death in this story about the ripple effect that one person's life can have. Little Bird is so enthralled by the "beautiful, bountiful, breathtaking music" wafting into the valley from the high hill that she follows the notes to their source: an old man, portrayed with white hair and tan skin, playing a piano. Little Bird makes her nest at his window and sings along daily, interacting with the man and his family until "one morning, all was quiet." Silence and sadness still hover over the hill when another bird from the valley appears, assuring Little Bird how far the old man's music has already traveled, entertaining "all of us"—children with varying skin tones and a cast of sweet-faced animals, all singing the man's songs. Musical notes float on the swirled lines that breezily flow through Kaulitzki's bucolic scenes of a cozy domestic life, accompanying Silvestro's comforting language and warm imagery. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

Goodbye, Balloon

Adam Ciccio, illus. by Margriet van der Berg. Clavis, $18.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-60537-771-1

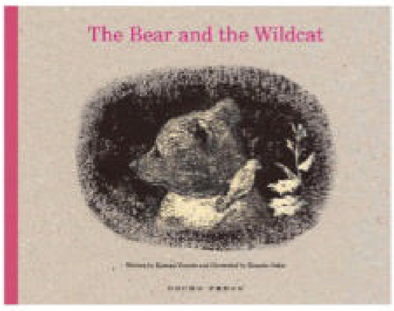


A youth processes loss around the disappearance of a beloved balloon via Ciccio's meditative first entry in the Healthy Minds series. When a sudden gust of wind yanks a large, buoyant balloon from the pale-skinned child's bike, the young narrator wishes it well ("*Goodbye, Balloon! I hope you have a fantastic adventure!*"), then closes their eyes and imagines the high-soaring adventures the two might have shared. In mind's eye, they drift through a variety of landscapes and a cloud of vibrant migrating flamingoes. At daydream's end, the protagonist, now ready to accept the balloon's departure, pictures it tied to the trike of another child, shown with brown skin. Van der Berg's watercolors, rendered in a cotton-candy hues, set a dreamy, ethereal backdrop befitting flights of fancy and emotional exploration. A supplementary note discusses how children deal with loss. Ages 5–9. *(Mar.)*

★ The Bear and the Wildcat

Kazumi Yumoto, trans. from the Japanese by Cathy Hirano, illus. by Komako Sakai. Gecko, $19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-877467-70-7

When Bear's friend, a little bird, dies suddenly, Bear is bereft. He makes a berry-stained, flower-lined box and tucks the bird inside, where "his tiny black beak gleamed like onyx." Bear's carrying the box with him soon disturbs the other animals: "It may be hard," they say, "but you'll have to forget." Bear subsequently grieves alone behind a locked door until, one sunny day, he encounters a wildcat with a strange box of his own, who acknowledges Bear's loss. "This little bird must have been a very special friend of yours." Wildcat plays the violin from his box for Bear and the departed bird; as Bear listens, he remembers all he loved about his friend, and prepares himself to say goodbye. Elegant, understated spreads over scumbled black backdrops by Sakai divide the story, the first half dark with Bear's misery, the second half dawning with light. Hirano's fine translation renders Bear's transition in simple, natural-sounding English, and Yumoto's sensitive characterization makes the story a touchstone for talking about loss. Ages 5–9. *(Feb.)*



Rainbow Letters: A Book for Rainbow Babies

Ceece Kelley, illus. by Marina Halak. Soaring Kite, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-953859-60-0

Kelley directs this compassionate, cheerfully rhyming text toward families who are welcoming a "rainbow baby"—an infant born after a miscarriage, or a birth or postpartum loss. As the story opens "in a dreamy kingdom tucked away/ past cotton candy skies," a brigade of sibling helpers with varying skin tones await an important job: creating a Rainbow Letter to be sewn into the prospective new arrival's receiving blanket. It's "a message/ from a sibling you never knew,/ to share our joy and gladness/ and soothe our parents too." Halak's textural mixed-media images depict the celestial sibling spirits, perhaps confusingly, as preschool-age kids. Though the uncontextualized imagery invites more questions than answers, the concept of continued connection may prove comforting: "We celebrate your life/ as ours is remembered too,/ and know that every single day,/ we'll be watching over you." Tips for sharing this book with children conclude. Ages up to 8. *(Mar.)*

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different skin tones, each expressing an emotion. Ages 3–7. *(May)*

Can You Hug a Forest?

Frances Gilbert, illus. by Amy Hevron. Beach Lane, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-66590-355-4

Gilbert (*Too Much Slime!*) answers the title's question with a set of instructions. Beginning with the answer ("Of course you can./ You'll need a forest, though"), the second-person address accompanies images of a doll-like, stylized child with light brown skin and scribbly pigtails. Hevron (*The Tide Pool Waits*) paints the child on wooden panels, alongside flowers, birds, and trees outlined with thick, oil-pastel-like strokes. Having provided a forest ("Here is one") and two arms ("Here are two. One. Two"), Gilbert continues in onomatopoeic how-to lines: "First, you hug the air./ *Whisha, whisha*, it says,/ whispering secrets from the sky." Curling light blue lines represent breezes; a red-crested woodpecker flies above the child. "Just open your arms,/ lift up your chin,/ and breathe all the way down to your toes." There are as many ways to hug the forest as there are parts of it, and every element—a leaf, a flower, a forest trail, and more—gets a spread of its own that reveals its distinctive sounds and textures. Each one is personified with merry, pin-dot features that make the forest look like a toy shop, and the child reacts actively to each one in this sensorially focused encounter with the natural world. Ages 4–8. *Illustrator's agent: Kirsten Hall, Catbird Productions. (May)*

How to Ride a Dragonfly

Kitty Donohoe, illus. by Anne Wilsdorf. Random House/Schwartz, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-5931-7564-4

Surrounded by the pleasures of a summery meadow, a blond, pale-skinned child in a red polka dot shift shrinks down and takes a dragonfly as a trusty steed. With a little simple magic ("Put a rose petal in your pocket at sunrise"), the child becomes small enough to catch and saddle the eager-eyed insect, which wears a dapper blue jacket and red striped pants. "Let's call her Priscilla," suggests the omniscient second-person narrator about the dragonfly. The intrepid duo joust with a bumblebee, attend a mishap-filled tea with two fairies, escape a hungry frog, and boogie with the Beetle Band before returning to the original place of enchantment just in time for the child to avoid staying permanently tiny. Donohoe (*There's Something About Sam*) strikes a tone of matter-of-fact commentary about the fanciful scenarios: "I'll bet you didn't know that fairies loathe stains and have bad tempers. You'd better hide if you want to avoid being turned into a toadstool." Thin-lined watercolor and ink illustrations by Wilsdorf, making a picture book debut, combine a Victorian floral sensibility with an action-packed arc, resulting in small-scale-focused visuals that are equal parts magical and impish. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Stephen Fraser, Jennifer De Chiara Literary. Illustrator's agent: Judy Sue Goodwin Sturges and April Prince, Studio Goodwin Sturges. (May)*

The Together Tree

Aisha Saeed, illus. by LeUyen Pham. Salaam Reads, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5344-6296-0

When Rumi moves across the country, his new teacher's request that the class make him "feel at home" goes unheeded. During recess, most of the students, shown as racially diverse, ignore Rumi, who's portrayed with brown skin and black hair. White-presenting Asher insults him ("His shoes are ugly"), and another light-skinned student laughs. East Asian-presenting Han "didn't think it was funny," but says nothing. Over the next few days, Asher continues to harass Rumi, who sits alone, "twirling a twig beneath the shady old willow tree," portrayed by Pham (*Itty-Bitty Kitty-Corn*) in layered scenes as a majestic bower of delicate green leaves. The escalating situation peaks with a stone thrown at Rumi, an event that pushes Han to act, precipitating a discovery about the new classmate and offering the kids a way forward. Han's action is the fulcrum in this compassionate tale about turning bystanders into upstanders, and the move to offer solace to Rumi rather than to confront Asher offers readers another way to intervene when there is conflict. An author's note discusses the personal seeds of this story by Saeed (*Amal Unbound*). Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Taylor Martindale Kean, Full Circle Literary. Illustrator's agent: Holly McGhee, Pippin Properties. (May)*

★ Maurice

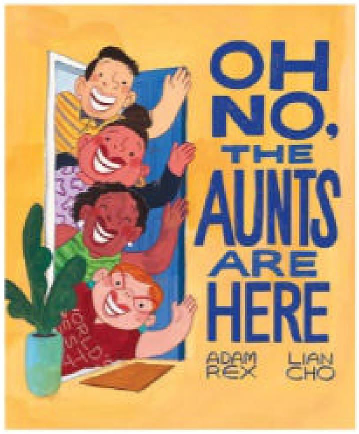
Jessixa Bagley. Chronicle, $17.99 (52p) ISBN 978-1-7972-1173-2

The eponymous protagonist of this soulful picture book from Bagley (*Courage Hats*) is an orange canine accordionist who once played big concert halls. "But times and things changed. They always do," and now he busks on the streets of an entirely dog-populated Paris. C'est la vie: as elegant watercolor and digitally collaged vignettes make clear, Maurice "still had songs to play." Against the city's backgrounds, he serenades passersby ("each note soaring to the sky"), displays kindness and congeniality, and takes inspiration from the bevy of birds who share his humble apartment. But times keep changing; Maurice starts feeling "shushed by the city's chaotic rhythms," and begins to see far fewer coins in his cup. Low on birdseed funds and determined to keep his beloved birds from starving, he throws open his window and, in a breathtaking double gatefold image, releases them into the wild, resigning himself to a heart that feels "like an empty birdcage." Bagley has confidence that her readers can handle a little melancholy, and so the quietly happy ending arrives at a measured pace, slowly assuring Maurice, and readers, that love and the pursuit of beauty endure across time and seasons. Ages 5–8. *Agent: Alexandra Penfold, Upstart Crow Literary. (May)*

★ Oh No, the Aunts Are Here

Adam Rex, illus. by Lian Cho. Chronicle, $16.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-7972-0794-0

Via a quartet of unconditionally, relentlessly loving aunts, Rex (*Gladys the Magic Chicken*) and Cho (*It Began with Lemonade*) breathe new life into a staple of kid humor: the older, oblivious-to-personal-space relative. Exasperatedly observed second-person text and bustling watercolor, gouache, and colored pencil art brim with warmhearted exaggeration as the boisterous aunts, shown with varying skin


OH NO, THE AUNTS ARE HERE
ADAM REX
LIAN CHO

tones, practically bust down the door to swarm their beloved nibling, a child portrayed with brown skin. Commandeering the following spreads and kitted out with fanny packs, lip balm, and sun visors (yes, one wears a "World's Best Aunt" T-shirt), they brandish "a dollar and a mint… a newspaper article… and a very small packet of peanuts"; pepper their overwhelmed charge with questions ("Do you still like toy horses?" "When did you stop liking horses?"); and fill the air with the smell of their lotion. In a turn of events that melds comedy and fantasy, the child realizes that the aunts are good people to have on one's side—they're mighty hand-sanitizer-wielding champions whose care makes one feel "warm as a coconut." It's a high-spirited, high-comedy portrait of intrusive, effusive relatives one can count on. Ages 5–8. *Author's agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House. (May)*

Fiction

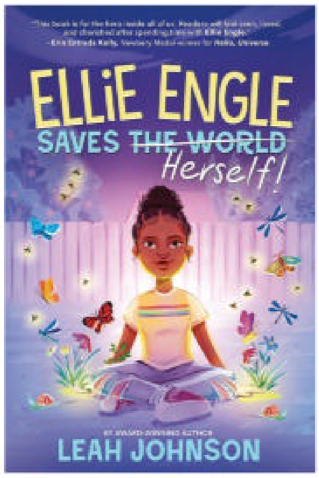
★ The Remarkable Rescue at Milkweed Meadow

Elaine Dimopoulos, illus. by Doug Salati. Charlesbridge, $17.99 (192p) ISBN 978-1-62354-333-4

An anxious young rabbit with a gift for storytelling narrates this intimately voiced, community-centered novel by Dimopoulos (*Turn the Tide*), which explores the value of crossing species lines and the bravery required to live in the world. When a birdseed-controlling blue jay eats a robin's egg in an act of retribution, Milkweed Meadow's young bunnies—taught to "stay alive" via brainpower and rigid rules—are told to "worry about the burrow-dwellers *only*." But young Butternut, an anxious rabbit who thrills at the stories recounted in her family's root room, wonders about the event's communal and long-term effects. Butternut soon meets a gregarious, newly fledged robin named Piper, and they encounter and befriend an injured fawn, acts that eventually lead to a cooperative rescue of creatures in dire need. As Butternut's world grows larger ("I'd performed a feat of athleticism. I'd met a young robin that spoke like an old poet"), her action-packed adventures with Piper underline the way that a survivalist mentality can come at the cost of a compassionate, connected, meaningful life. Occasional illustrations by Salati (*Hot Dog*), in graphite and gouache, elegantly depict wildlife scenes. Ages 8–11. *Author's agent: Allison Hellegers, Stimola Literary. Illustrator's agent: Erica Rand Silverman, Stimola Literary Studio. (May)*

★ Ellie Engle Saves Herself (Ellie Engle #1)

Leah Johnson. Disney-Hyperion, $18.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-368-08555-7



Comic book enthusiast Ellie Engle, who is Black, sees herself as the epitome of ordinary, and she's content to dwell in the pressure-free shadow of her outgoing Latina best friend, Abby Ortega. But after an earthquake strikes Plainsboro, Ind., the day the girls start junior high, Ellie realizes she has a crush on Abby, and she also somehow manages to resurrect her own dead pet fish. Slowly, Ellie discovers that she can bring living organisms back to life, for a cost. Ellie, who sometimes experiences panic attacks, doesn't want to cause trouble for her hardworking single mom, and she worries about how the powers of the supers in her comics affect their loved ones. But when popularity-intent Abby pressures Ellie to mask and even reverse her powers, Ellie is reluctant to let them go—even as knowledge of her abilities goes viral, leaving her no choice but to stand on her own two feet. Marrying her customary openhearted style with a necromancy-oriented origin story, Johnson (*You Should See Me in a Crown*) tackles the pains of growing up—changing bodies, shifting bonds, early crushes, and defining oneself on one's own terms—making for a warmly rendered, lightly speculative love story about a girl learning to believe that she's anything but ordinary. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Patrice Caldwell, New Leaf Literary. (May)*

Escape from Grimstone Manor (Monsterious #1)

Matt McMann. Putnam, $17.99 (192p) ISBN 978-0-593-53069-6; $7.99 paper ISBN 978-0-593-53071-9

A sepulchral theme park tests a trio of 12-year-olds in musician McMann's debut, a pared-down adventure with Goosebumps vibes. Visiting amusement park ThrillVille, friends Mateo, Taylor, and Zari approach haunted house Grimstone Manor near closing time. It's built on the grounds of a mansion that once belonged to suspected necromancer Hezekiah Crawly, whose mysterious disappearance 100 years back is the stuff of local lore. The three gain a grim opportunity to explore the legend firsthand when their ride through the animatronic manor grinds to a halt, stranding them. Tensions, already high between wary Mateo and impulsive Taylor, boil over—despite reserved Zari's exasperated attempts at peacemaking—resulting in a fight that reveals just how real the local yarn is. The action proves unrelenting as the friends fight and flee from all manner of possessed skeletons, mummies, and more in scenes that pause just long enough for the group to attempt reconciliation. An abrupt ending seems designed to propel readers into the next book, while a combination of interpersonal vulnerability and monster mayhem drives a horror-tinged thriller that's more rollicking than revolting. Mateo and Zari are described as having brown skin; Taylor presents as white. Publishing simultaneously: *The Snatcher of Raven Hollow.* Ages 8–12. *Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (May)*

★ The Firefly Summer

Morgan Matson. Simon & Schuster, $18.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-534493-35-3

When a tween accepts an invitation to stay with her estranged maternal grandparents in the Poconos, she finds a large and lively extended family, and a treasure map, in this captivating mystery, a middle grade debut from Matson (*Take Me Home Tonight*). Eager to hear stories about her mom, who died when she was three, only child Ryanna Stuart nervously agrees when the Van Camps invite her to stay for the summer at their inoperative summer property, Camp Van Camp, which is in danger of being razed by a neighbor. As the mystery-loving 11-year-old settles into the summer's rhythms, she grows closer to her newfound family, teaming up with cousins her age to follow marginalia once scribbled by her mother in a mystery book and to locate a treasure map that they hope will save the camp. Matson's vibrant setting, peopled with an easygoing extended family that encourages free play, is irresistibly rendered, while Ryanna's quest to learn more about her mother, as well as her father's falling out with the family, imbues the carefully plotted central mystery with emotional resonance. Ryanna and her dad are white; intersectional diversity is present in the extended family. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Emily van Beek, Folio Jr./Folio Literary. (May)*

Monster Camp

Sarah Henning. McElderry, $17.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-6659-3005-5

The founder of Evermore Middle School's Monster LARPing Club, 11-year-old Sylvie Shaw loves to embrace her inner monster, constantly role-playing as a vampire to remain connected to her late horror-fan mother. Glad to have Sylvie interacting with others instead of constantly watching monster flicks, her father plans to send her to summer camp but forbids Monster Camp, which promises a full week of fully immersive monster role-playing. Finding a way to attend via a nearby survival skills camp, Sylvie doesn't take long to discover that Monster Camp isn't for would-be monsters, but for real ones—ghosts, werewolves, witches, vampires, and more—and that she must somehow prevent anyone from realizing she's a human in their midst. What starts out as worrisome eventually becomes fun, but how can Sylvie remain true to the camp's motto of "be kind and be yourself" when she's misleading others? Via an eerie but endearing summer camp setting, this middle grade debut from Henning (*It's All in How You Fall*) considers the cost of intolerance and what it means to belong, as seen through the eyes of a resourceful protagonist trying to find herself and her people. Sylvie cues as white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Whitney Ross, Irene Goodman Literary. (May)*

The Museum of Lost and Found

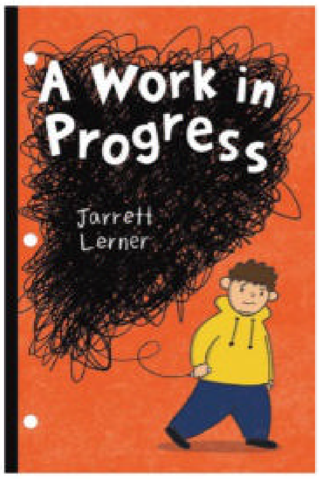
Leila Sales, illus. by Jacqueline Li. Amulet, $18.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4197-5451-7

Sixth grader Vanessa Lepp is hurt and bewildered about being inexplicably abandoned by best friend Bailey Dominguez. When Vanessa discovers a boarded-up museum near her small-town Ohio home, she's fascinated by its empty frames and pedestals, and begins creating an exhibit about Bailey, hoping to understand what went wrong and to win her friend back. Others, including Vanessa's 14-year-old brother Sterling, happen upon the museum and begin building their own personal exhibits, forming a secret community that helps Vanessa expand her focus to other friends—and to the mysterious creator of a remarkable painting that she regards in the museum. Sales (*Once Was a Time*) persuasively portrays Vanessa's frustration around others' expectations, her lack of control over her life, and her anxiety, whose presentation involves compulsive skin-picking. Rendering the intensity of middle school dynamics in serviceable prose, this multifaceted art mystery with a focus on interpersonal bonds tackles an array of themes—anxiety, friendship's natural fluctuations, and learning to let go of the past—while offering opportunity for reflection. Occasional b&w illustrations from Li portray objects from Vanessa's exhibit. Vanessa cues as white and Jewish; Bailey is Mexican American. Ages 8–12. *(May)*

★ A Work in Progress

Jarrett Lerner. Aladdin, $17.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-6659-0515-2

Using succinct and personal-feeling verse, Lerner (the Nat the Cat series) crafts an empathetic illustrated novel about one boy's experience with body dysmorphia, disordered eating, and stigma. Ever since an incident three years ago in which a bully maliciously called him fat in a crowded hallway ("That word.// He spat it at me/ like it was the worst one/ he knew"), middle schooler Will Chambers has felt self-conscious in his body, wearing baggy clothes and isolating himself from his friends. He pretends everything is fine, even as he begins eating less. But when new friend Markus questions Will about why he never brings anything for lunch, and Will overhears hurtful gossip about his crush on a skinny classmate, Will moves further into a cycle of bingeing and restricting food. Lerner's sketch-like illustrations, presented as Will's own diary doodles, render grayscale caricatures of Will's classmates, while his own self-portrait, depicted via stark black scribbles, slowly morphs into a monstrous version of himself that fills the page. Employing frenetic pacing and disjointed verse that conveys Will's growing anxiety and internalized shame, Lerner cultivates a perceptive representation of recovery and self-acceptance. Most characters' skin tones reflect the white of the page. Ages 8–12. *(May)*



Clementine

Ann Hood. Penguin Workshop, $17.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-593-09410-5

Since her younger sister Halley died from an allergic reaction to peanuts two years prior to this book's start, now-14-year-old Clementine Marsh, who cues as white, has experienced depression and grief that led to a suicide attempt. Now, she's transitioned out of her beloved Montessori and started ninth grade at a chaotic new school where she experiences bullying, slaps a smirking classmate, and believes she's seen as "the one who has lost her mind." Meanwhile, she also feels as if she's stuck in a snow globe where tears fall instead of snow. Clementine's widowed mother provides support via a residential program and therapy, a support group, a trip to see old friends, and, finally, what Clementine—whose snarky first-person narration is candid and sometimes funny—calls a "low-rent Outward Bound." The program emphasizes activity, community, and routine, but nothing really helps, especially when Clementine's mother starts dating. Balancing each of Clementine's steps forward with one back, Hood's follow-up to *Jude Banks, Superhero* offers a difficult, emotionally keyed portrayal of grief, depression, and suicidal ideation in which healing comes slowly, and in fits and starts. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Gail Hochman, Brandt & Hochman. (May)*

Never Trust a Gemini

Freja Nicole Woolf. Walker Books US, $19.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-5362-3054-3

White 14-year-old Aquarius Cathleen Phillips, an avid astrology follower, believes that she and longtime crush Alison—who is white, Ghanaian, and a Pisces—are cosmically meant to be. But when Alison asks Cat to check her compatibility with a Gemini named Oscar ("You can NEVER trust a Gemini," Cat claims), Cat worries that Alison might only like boys. Heartbroken and following advice from a classmate ("A boyfriend is the best natural cleanse"), Cat starts a romantic relationship with schoolmate Jamie, a Cancer, but "kissing him is more hard work than fireworks." Soon, Cat becomes intrigued with Irish newcomer Morgan—a Gemini—breaking up with Jamie to secretly pursue Morgan. Cat's lingering feelings for Alison and hesitance to come out, however, threaten their budding relationship. Cat's reliance on astrology to help foster relationships endearingly reflects contemporary teens' obsession with cosmic forces, and her realization that not everyone is defined by what's in their horoscopes and birth charts is endearing. Debut author Woolf sensitively balances Cat's painful setbacks with her joyful triumphs, and the teen's consistently on-target observations and gently sarcastic tone make for many laugh-out-loud moments in this astrology-filled rom-com. Ages 12–up. *(May)*

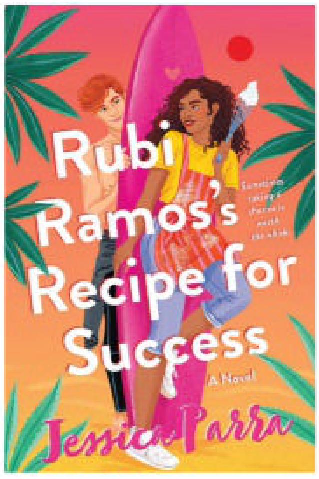
Picture-Perfect Boyfriend

Becky Dean. Delacorte, $12.99 paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-593-56991-7

Eight months before this book's start, high schooler Kenzie Reed vowed to completely change her life. Because her family didn't support her photography aspirations, she gave up the hobby to cultivate an interest in her parents' optometry business, joining her school's science club and attending meetings for future healthcare professionals. She even invented a boyfriend named Jacob Miller to impress her parents. Kenzie thinks her upcoming vacation to Maui will be a much-needed break from pretending, until she learns that her parents invited Jacob on their vacation, too. But if Kenzie made him up, who is this stranger? Desperate to keep up the charade and uncover the mystery behind the newcomer, Kenzie stays mum. The couple explore Maui while getting to know each other, connecting over similar interests, shared conflicts, and immediate chemistry. Hawaii's natural beauty shines via Kenzie's tourist eye, and her airy narration and tendency to romanticize the world around her through her camera's lens read as a love letter to the island. Dean (*Love & Other Great Expectations*) spins an immersive and romantic story about being true to oneself that features Kenzie's intensely personal troubles amid a far-fetched premise that recalls classic rom-com tropes. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Eva Scalzo, Speilburg Literary. (May)*

Rubi Ramos's Recipe for Success

Jessica Parra. Wednesday, $20 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-86252-5



Inspired by her years growing up in her parents' Orange County bakery, 17-year-old debate captain Rubi Ramos loves to invent recipes, but her parents want her to pursue what they consider to be a more practical career. They encourage her to give up baking and, instead, attend prestigious Alma University to become a lawyer. Rubi wants to make her Afro-Cuban father and Cuban mother happy, so she's devastated when she's waitlisted at Alma. To make matters worse, her parents mistakenly think she got in and, not wanting to break their hearts, Rubi doesn't set them straight. As Rubi strives to solve her predicament, white debate teammate Madeline proposes a trade: if Rubi gives up her captain status, Madeline will use her connections to get Rubi off the Alma waiting list. Rubi agrees; she then secretly enters a baking competition, which distracts her from Alma preparations. But when Madeline intentionally schedules an important Alma interview on the same day as the baking competition final, Rubi must choose between her two passions. Propulsive chapters, plenty of high-stakes tension, and candid conversations about racism and classism fill Parra's lively debut. Foodies will relish detailed descriptions of Rubi's scrumptious Cuban-inspired creations, while romance buffs will swoon over the budding romance between Rubi and her surfer boy math tutor, who cues as white. Ages 12–up. *(May)*

Stranger Danger

Maren Stoffels. Underlined, $10.99 paper (224p) ISBN 978-0-5936-4744-8

A week studying for finals in a remote farmhouse turns terrifying for a group of high school seniors in this briskly paced mystery by Stoffels (*Room Service*). Renting a secluded house, Nova; her boyfriend, Vin; and their best friend Lotus go off the grid to focus on academics, forgoing smartphones, Wi-Fi, and other technology. Following unexplained happenings that include missing items and sudden injury, the teens soon realize that someone has been watching them. Armed with only an unreliable cell phone and the house's dangerous landline, which delivers an electric shock when the trio try to use it, the group struggles to call for help as their adversary closes in. All three teens have secrets they've been keeping from one another, which sow distrust as they're revealed. Via alternating perspectives that feature Lotus's savvy first-person narration and an unknown party whose identity is gradually unraveled over the course of the story, Stoffels presents a bemusing mystery punctuated by deceptive twists and sometimes confusing, if effectively shocking, reveals. A plotline involving a student-teacher relationship, and its potential consequences, is minimally explored. All characters are assumed white. Ages 12–up. *(May)*

Time Out

Sean Hayes, Todd Milliner, and Carlyn Greenwald. Simon & Schuster, $18.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-5344-9262-2

Actor Hayes (*Plum*) and debut author Milliner, a producer, team up with Greenwald (*Sizzle Reel*, for adults) to craft a timely queer romance that unfolds amid the world of small-town social politics.

Since his beloved grandfather's recent death, basketball star Barclay has endeavored to live his "fullest life," which means coming out as gay to his friends and loved ones. He announces the news on his 16th birthday, during his captain's speech at a school pep rally, but instead of the cheers and support he expected, his declaration is met with foreboding silence. Afterward, it feels as if his school turns against him: he's labeled an attention seeker, he overhears discussions regarding whether he should remain on the squad, and his teammates are openly homophobic. Fed up with the harassment, Barclay quits basketball and joins the school newspaper staff, where he meets and develops feelings for handsome, opinionated classmate Christopher, who helps Barclay report on the injustices and corruption occurring in their conservative Georgia community. Vibrant, well-defined characters add credibility to issues surrounding grief, love, and prejudice, while meticulous pacing and careful attention to the bureaucracy of towns ruled by local sports giants coalesce into a seamless, engrossing read. Ages 12–up. *(May)*

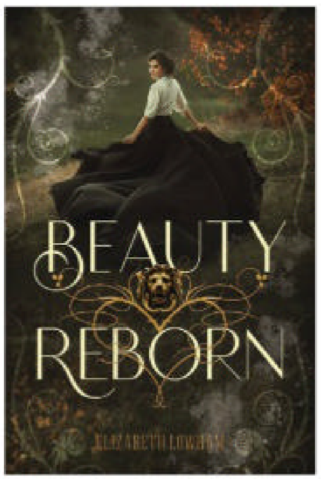
Your Plantation Prom Is Not Okay

Kelly McWilliams. Little, Brown, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-316-44993-9

Plans to turn a plantation into a wedding venue force a Black teen to confront loss while fighting racism in this moving novel by McWilliams (*Mirror Girls*). Harriet Douglass is passionate about highlighting the legacy of Westwood, a museum in Louisiana focusing on enslaved people's history, which her mother curated up until her death from cancer. When Harriet discovers that the Belle Grove plantation next door has been bought by white soap opera star Claudia Hartwell to host celebrity nuptials, Harriet determines to prevent it from becoming a party venue. Claudia's daughter, Layla, a popular online influencer, shares in Harriet's disappointment about her mother's plans and—despite Harriet's original mistrust and Layla's initial microaggressions—the pair work together to "cancel Belle Grove," developing genuine friendship along the way. Meanwhile, Harriet's private struggles regulating strong emotions; managing romantic feelings for a childhood friend; and navigating her father's grief are exacerbated by her school's intention to host prom at Belle Grove. McWilliams pens a touching story about grief, compassion for one's ancestors, and one teen's pursuit of justice in this thoughtfully rendered telling, which interrogates the romanticization of Black pain and the pros and cons of social media activism. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (May)*

Beauty Reborn

Elizabeth Lowham. Shadow Mountain, $19.99 (208p) ISBN 978-1-63993-106-4



Lowham adeptly wrangles classic elements of "Beauty and the Beast" to craft a sensitive and slow-burning retelling that tackles issues of sexual violence. As recompense for the rose her merchant father plucked from the castle garden, 18-year-old Beauty—so named by her deceased mother, who "valued handsome appearance above all other virtues"—delivers herself to the enchanted residence of the mysterious Beast. Intellectual Beauty, who is still coping with having been sexually assaulted by her former suitor, a lord baron's heir, secretly hopes the Beast will devour her, as she "would rather die" than have to face the suitor again. Instead, the magical, inexplicably empty estate provides an environment in which she and the Beast slowly develop a rapport through reading and philosophy. Beauty finds solace in the castle, and the distance from her family helps her reevaluate her complex relationships with them. Via intense flashbacks to Beauty's life before living with the Beast, Lowham addresses Beauty's harrowing history. While this lavish version of the original tale is comfortingly familiar, the creator's narrative stands out in its portrayal of themes surrounding trauma and recovery alongside familiar musings on perceived differences between humans and monsters. Characters read as white. Ages 13–19. *(May)*

Girls Like Girls

Hayley Kiyoko. Wednesday, $20 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-81763-1

Musician Kiyoko crafts a pitch-perfect tale about a grieving teen in 2006 grappling with first love in this touching debut, inspired by the viral music video of the same name. Following her mother's death by suicide, 17-year-old Asian American Coley moves to rural Oregon to live with the father she barely knows. After nearly being run over by their car, Coley falls into a friend group comprising chill stoner Alex, competitive dancer Sonya, and Sonya's bro-ish on-again, off-again boyfriend Trenton. As Coley struggles to untangle mixed romantic signals from Sonya, Coley also tries persuading her that Trenton's gaslighting and physically aggressive behavior are red flags. When the girls kiss, Sonya withdraws from Coley, and their connection ruptures. After a series of missteps, Coley finds stability working as a server at a hibachi restaurant and begins connecting with her father. But Sonya's sudden reappearance upsets Coley's newfound balance and reignites her buried feelings. Rapid-fire dialogue and Coley's biting narration drip with early aughts references that signal the time period. Coley and Sonya's messy emotions and insta-love attraction, plagued by personal fears and external conflicts, buoy this powerfully romantic read. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Katelyn Dougherty, Paradigm Entertainment. (May)*

Lying in the Deep

Diana Urban. Razorbill, $18.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-5935-2760-3

Along with 700 other students, Stanford University sophomore Jade Miller is spending a semester at sea in a prestigious Campus on Board program. Much to Jade's distress, among the passengers are her ex-boyfriend, Silas, and her former best friend, Lainey, who are now a couple. Luckily, Jade gets along with her twin dorm-mates, Divya and Navya; befriends YouTube skincare sensation Miguel and his roommate Tate; and develops a budding relationship with brooding, mysterious Felix. But she can't shake her preoccupation with Silas, and craves answers as to why he dumped her for Lainey. Jade plans to confront the pair, but then Lainey goes missing, leaving behind a blood-covered cabin—and Jade is the primary suspect. Though there's no dearth of potential culprits, Jade embarks on some dangerous sleuthing to clear her name as an increasing body count begins whittling away at possible perps. Jade's fixation on Silas and Lainey is somewhat laboriously rendered, leading to repetitious narration. Nevertheless, this cleverly plotted mystery and its earned, complex solution by Urban (*These Deadly Games*) boast numerous exhilarating twists and red herrings. Main characters read as white; context clues suggest racial diversity throughout. Ages 14–up. *(May)*

The Rules of Us

Jennifer Nissley. Labyrinth Road, $18.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-5934-8489-0

On the night that Jillian Bortles approaches her longtime boyfriend, Henry Yoo, about losing their virginities to each other, the unexpected happens—they both come out to one another as queer. Despite the revelation, the two New Yorkers vow to remain best friends and continue to pursue the future they've been building together, which involves snagging the coveted Purdy Memorial Scholarship, attending Oneida Polytechnic Institute, and starting their own video game company. They enter the summer with a set of rules meant to guarantee their success in staying friends: "no fighting, no messing around, no more running, Purdy first." But when the Purdy scholarship committee requests that they sign up for summer experiences that demonstrate their well-roundedness, Jillian and Henry find themselves separated for the first time ever, and new crushes, old hurts, and tightly held secrets create fissures in their friendship. Through Jillian's intense and emotionally raw first-person POV, Nissley (*The Mythic Koda Rose*) depicts the duo's codependent relationship and eventual untangling with earnest nuance, making for a tender portrait of a girl on the cusp of adulthood trying to reconcile the future she thought she'd have with the one she is heading toward. Jillian is white and Henry is Korean. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Danielle Burby, Mad Woman Literary. (May)*

Court of the Undying Seasons

A.M. Strickland. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-250-83262-7

In this alluring queer fantasy from Strickland (*In the Ravenous Dark*), during a ritual called the Finding, teens randomly draw lots to be trained in vampirism by vampires from Castle Courtsheart before either being turned or subjugated, depending on their observed potential. Nineteen-year-old orphan Fin has despised vampires ever since her mother's selection in the Finding years ago. Her lone friend and secret crush Silvea has taken care of Fin over the years, so when vampires visit their village and Silvea nearly draws the incriminating lot, Fin claims it first. Fin plans to spend her time at Courtsheart learning to kill vampires, but instead forms attachments, particularly with her brooding mentor, Gavron, and enthusiastic fellow novice Marai. When someone begins exsanguinating those around her, Fin must make a choice: continue scheming to avenge the family she lost, or embrace her new life to protect the one she's found. Witty dialogue and arch antagonism keep the character dynamics breezy, while high-stakes action and fraught romance imbue the narrative with urgent pacing. Strickland further employs complex mythology and a bombshell-laden plot to interrogate issues of choice, consent, and identity. Fin cues as white; the supporting cast is intersectionally diverse. Ages 15–up. *Agent: Hannah Bowman, Lisa Dawson Assoc. (May)*

Comics

King of Cool (One Cool Duck #1)

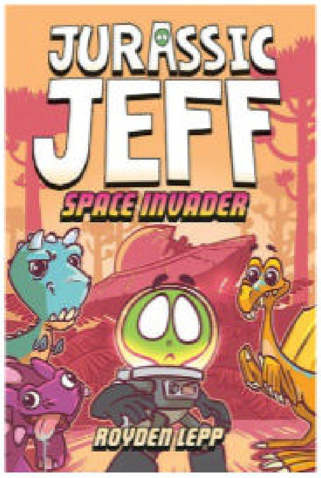
Mike Petrik. Hippo Park, $12.99 (64p) ISBN 978-1-6626-4018-6; $8.99 paper ISBN 978-1-6626-4019-3

Petrik (*The Silly Sounds of Christmas*) offers a goofy graphic novel chapter book series launch starring bright green Duck, the effortlessly cool leader of a pack of anthropomorphized animal kids living in an idyllic woodland neighborhood. Shades-wearing Duck can "kickflip on a skateboard" and routinely scores highest at the arcade, and his vibe is never aloof—always affable and affirming. But newcomer Cat represents cool's dark side: he's arrogant, contemptuous, and inconsiderate. Duck calls him out ("That wasn't very nice, Cat," says Duck when the feline swipes Pig's pizza slice), but Cat's charisma eventually wins over the rest of Duck's friend group, dampening the fowl's spirit. Bummed, he retreats home and puts away his shades, but reassurance from Grandpa Duck prompts Duck's return to local neighborhood hot spots, where he rescues Cat from an ill-advised tree-diving stunt. Chastened Cat admits he's "been acting like a not-so-nice crumbbum," and Duck invites him to officially join his crew. Dialogue sometimes reads a bit outdated, often feeling as if it's emulating 1950s greaser speech, but the digital illustrations have plenty of authentic verve, thanks to the bright, saturated palette; energetic, expertly paced compositions; and an eager cast savoring their summer independence. Ages 6–9. *(May)*

Space Invader (Jurassic Jeff #1)

Royden Lepp. Random House Graphic, $13.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-593-56539-1

Spaceships, dinosaurs, lessons about friendship, and a smidge of danger populate this insightful and adventuresome graphic novel series launch by Lepp (the Rust series). Green alien Jeff is determined to arrive on—and swiftly conquer—Earth, before obtaining some chicken nuggets and returning to the Academy of Space Exploration, where he will proclaim his victory to his classmates and finally receive the accolades Jeff believes he deserves. When Jeff crash-lands on a prehistoric Earth, it's not the contemporary planet he'd been anticipating. He nevertheless demands that the resident dinosaurs "take me to your elected or self-elected ruler, mortal deity, or principal organism," only to learn that no one is in charge, chicken nuggets haven't been invented yet, and the Wi-Fi is horrendous. He befriends talking dinosaurs Carl, Hungry, and Spike, who take him to the only plausible leader they know: Trevor, a walking, talking fish who speaks in proverbs and clichés. Lepp leverages bright colors and thick lines to



make characters pop, and their cartoonish proportions and equally animated dialogue jives well with the story's tone. By exploring what it means to make and keep friends while highlighting issues of bullying and forgiveness, Lepp delivers a madcap, message-forward story that doesn't take itself too seriously. Ages 7–10. *(May)*

Lost in the Mountains (Survival Scout #1)

Maxwell Eaton III. Roaring Brook, $19.99 (144p) ISBN 978-1-2507-9046-0; $12.99 paper ISBN 978-1-250-79047-7

Scout and her older brother—a self-proclaimed "nearly professional local guide"—are heading to the final campsite of their four-day backpacking trip when Big Brother announces they're lost. After reading the map upside down, leading them down an unmarked trail, losing his GPS and cell phone, and running off, literally pursued by a bear, Big Brother leaves Scout alone in the woods. With only half the duo's supplies and a compass for guidance, coolheaded and methodical Scout must focus on finding water, shelter, and food, all while signaling for help. Scout's situation isn't all doom-and-gloom, however: an irreverent talking skunk offers comic relief, and informative, brightly colored flowcharts break down each of her priorities and how best to approach them, modeling critical problem solving and survival skills. Structuring Scout's adventure as an in-depth wilderness guide, Eaton (the Truth About Your Favorite Animals series) uses crisp-lined, digitally colored pen and ink cartooning to present easily digestible information about venturing into the great outdoors, including how to build a sturdy lean-to shelter, catch and gut a fish, and navigate by compass and topographic map. It's a thoroughly enjoyable wilderness-themed geek-out, even for readers who never explore beyond their backyard. Scout and Big Brother read as white. Ages 8–12. *(May)*

Occulted

Amy Rose and Ryan Estrada, illus. by Jeongmin Lee. Iron Circus, $15 paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-63899-109-0

In the final panels of this gripping graphic novel memoir, Rose defines the titular phrase as "an astronomical term for when something is hidden from view." For Rose, the term is all-encompassing when applied to her childhood being raised and largely neglected in the Temple, a cult commune in San Diego, where she is cut off from the world. Since her mother is sick and requires a lot of rest, Rose spends most of her time with the Temple's acerbic and emotionally manipulative leader. Rose feels most at peace when she's reading, and she delights in finding Leader's secret library. But after deeming Rose "too stupid. Or just corrupted," Leader sends her home with Jeanie and Derek, Temple members who reside off-site and who become her adoptive parents. With them, she experiences the outside world—going to grocery stores, learning how to woodwork, and visiting the public library. Lee's uncomplicated, thinly lined b&w illustrations keep the characters and their emotions front and center. Rose and Estrada (the Student Ambassador series) imbue young Rose's harrowing story with emotional heft by navigating heavy themes involving emotional abuse. Ages 10–14. *(May)*

Nonfiction

Men of the 65th: The Borinqueneers of the Korean War

Talia Aikens-Nuñez. Zest, $17.99 paper (136p) ISBN 978-1-7284-7914-9

In a striking telling, Aikens-Nuñez (*Small Nap, Little Dream*) chronicles the formation, accomplishments, court-martial, and legacy of the Army's 65th Infantry Regiment, the only Puerto Rican unit in U.S. Army history. Via accessible and animated-feeling text, Aikens-Nuñez details Congress's 1899 establishment of the 65th—known as the Borinqueneers—which was the "biggest, longest-standing Latino military unit in US history." In a foreword, retired U.S. Army colonel Gilberto Villahermosa describes the 65th as one of only four units to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, while subsequent brief, propulsive chapters outline how the unit would eventually serve in both world wars and the Korean War. Despite the Borinqueneers' acumen, they still endured prejudiced treatment from fellow troops, who believed that "Puerto Ricans could never be good soldiers." In penultimate chapter "Courts-Martial," the author explains how 92 Borinqueneers were found guilty in November 1952 for refusing to fight following the unit's near-massacre in a strategic battle, a crime for which none of the continental U.S. soldiers involved were tried. An important read about an often forgotten piece of U.S. military history that celebrates its subject by forefronting their bravery in overcoming obstacles both foreign and domestic. Ages 11–up. *(May)*

The Women Who Build Hollywood: 12 Trailblazers in Front of and Behind the Camera

Susan Goldman Rubin. Calkins Creek, $18.99 (208p) ISBN 978-1-6626-8010-6

Attentively recounting their impact on the film industry, Rubin (*Madame Alexander*) centers intersectionally diverse pioneering women from 1900 to 1940, including Dorothy Emma Arzner, a queer film director; Hattie McDaniel, the first Black person to win an Academy Award; and Chinese American actor Anna May Wong. A foreword by Ruth E. Carter, the first African American to win the Academy Award for Best Costume Design, praises the women discussed for their bravery and asserts that "because they dared to dream, I was able to." Rubin notes in a brief introduction that "moviemaking wasn't taken seriously" as a lucrative opportunity, a widely held belief that allowed women to pursue jobs in film. Carefully researched chapters chronicle the highlights of each subject's accomplishments while also providing historical context surrounding the time they lived in and how significant events—the Great Depression, Jim Crow, world wars, and widespread sickness—impacted their careers. Illuminating b&w photographs feature throughout, providing behind-the-scenes glimpses into the women's professional lives and elevating the timely appeal of this worthy telling. A beginning note addresses era-specific language and phrases used. Extensive back matter concludes. Ages 12–up. *(May)* ■

booklife REVIEWS

BookLife Reviews

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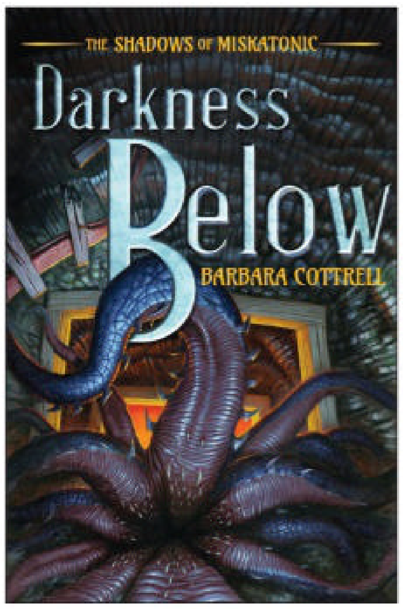
SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Darkness Below: The Shadows of Miskatonic

Barbara Cottrell | Vanishing Edge Press
328p, e-book, $8.99, ISBN 979-8-986-59381-4



Blending elements from cosmic horror, dark fantasy, and magic-school mysteries while putting a smart contemporary spin on Lovecraftian terrors, Cottrell's fiction debut centers on Ellen Logan, a student possessing psychic abilities who moonlights as a fortune teller at the local occult bookstore to pay her way through Miskatonic University, a place of higher learning devoted to the occult and other supernatural phenomenon. Ellen's life is turned upside down when her friend, Stephanie, is found dead, presumably from falling from the top of the campus' clock tower. When it comes to light that Stephanie was researching a horrible accident in a long-forgotten mine, Ellen must work with her broodingly attractive, psychic-hating professor to unearth buried truths—all as she strives to hone her psychic powers.

The plot focuses on the supernatural, with ghosts, possession, Lovecraft's "Dreamlands," and long-dead miners in an intriguing mix. Still, Cottrell does wonders giving Ellen a natural, up-to-date voice, freshening up the familiar mythos. Unlike doom-and-gloom heroes of many works in the Lovecraftian vein, Ellen is quick to disbelief and ready to stand up for herself as she ventures into the unknown with gusto.

With a faculty advisor to Miskatonic's psychic student organization, and her doting Uncle Joshua, *Darkness Below* shows that "light can be dark. Unclean." But it also demonstrates, as Ellen and Professor Carter hunt down lost tomes and face unspeakable dangers that darkness need not be overwhelming. Ellen's an arresting guide, and readers who relish this milieu will be eager for the followup.

A college student faces Lovecraftian horrors and mysteries in this winning series starter.

Great for fans of Leigh Bardugo's *Ninth House*, Ruthanna Emrys's *Winter Tide*.

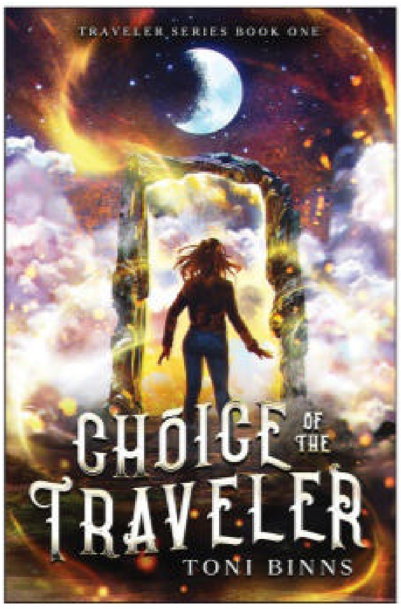
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Choice of the Traveler

Toni Binns | Bardhwood Press, LLC
275p, e-book, $2.99, ASIN B0BLZSC74Z



In the charming first entry of the Traveler series, Binns's followup to the Magic Toll books, destiny brings two best friends together to save Terra from a demon invasion. After placing her mother in a nursing home for dementia, 21-year-old diminutive human Betha Dubios is transferring to Saint Luna College on Pack Island, usually reserved for elves, trolls, shifters, vampires, and angelfolk. There she reunites with her BFF Angie, a Shadow Wolf shifter—a species thought to be nearly extinct. At a nearby club, Betha hears a strange buzzing followed by a deadly attack by demons. Betha learns that she is actually one of the very rare Travelers, who guard the Nexus, a group of portals to different worlds.

Binns builds the action and creates a complex world of politics and fantasy lore. Betha learns to use her Traveler's powers from Kyra, Terra's only other Traveler. Kyra tells her that she must stop the demons, who are trying to break the Accords, the fragile treaty that keeps Terra from being invaded through the portals. To help her, Betha must bond with an Anchor, a person who will ground her and keep her soul from getting lost. Betha chooses Angie and learns to hone her battle skills from handsome trainer, Carter. Betha and Angie face obstacles from the powerful council that governs Terra, and the long-kept secrets of Betha's mother.

Fantasy fans will be charmed by this thrilling adventure in a fully fleshed-out world.

Alternating points of view give the characters breath and distinction as they negotiate feelings of belonging, a sense of identity, and the value of friendship. The worldbuilding is tight, the peril serious, and the writing top notch. Readers will root for the young adults as they strive to make their way in the world.

Great for fans of Caroline Peckham and Susanne Valenti's Zodiac Academy series, J.M. Miro's *Ordinary Monsters.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **t–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

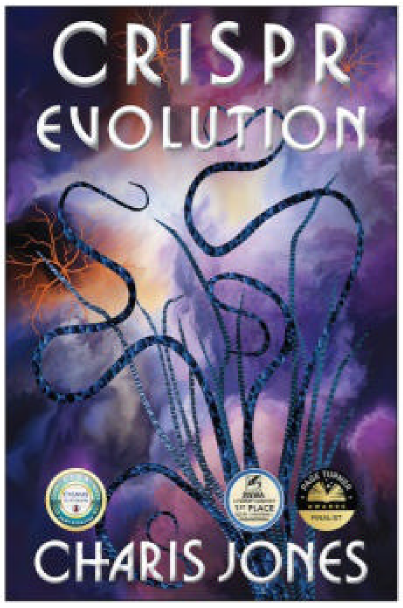
SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

CRISPR Evolution

Charis Jones

381p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 979-8-9863849-0-0



This gripping and accomplished debut novel imagines a near future where, after the initial jolts of a revolution in gene editing, the federal government centralizes biomedical research and development, and independent geneticists like Howard Wake go underground. A "garage biologist" already on the run, Wake conducts bold experiments in a portable lab with his children, who are assistants and subjects. Both are growing up with a "CRISPR machine" inside them, a protein of Howard's own design, engineered "to make unpredictable improvements," such as the gleaming, hair-like camouflaging appendages of eight-year-old daughter Aurie. But it's not just "government goons" in Wake's wake. As the family road-trips north to Maine and the presumed safety of Howard's brother's home, son Py begins to manifest mysterious—possibly dangerous—new abilities, and they're pursued by someone with a pressingly personal connection.

Jones spins this heady story in smart, engaging prose, attuned to her casts' individual perspectives, alive to the surprising details of an increasingly automated American future. The science is clear and persuasive—Jones is a biomedical researcher—but presented with an emphasis on its application. For all its family drama and on-the-run suspense, this is a novel about where we're headed—and how we might not be able to control what changes. It's a thriller but anchored in the literary wing of science fiction, driven by character, given to colloquies, and often evocative in its descriptions of diners and the mushrooms that, in a well-plotted jolt, prove essential to both the development of the story and our species.

Through it all, Jones is committed to capturing what this future feels like—and to dramatizing the evolutionary imperative with both exciting scenes and grand revelations of the sort readers of serious science fiction will find thrilling. The novel's long, and its ambitions sometimes come at the expense of narrative momentum, but it's also rousing, moving, and rewarding.

This superb science fiction novel finds a family on the run—and on the cusp of an evolutionary leap.

Great for fans of Sarah Gailey's *The Echo Wife*, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

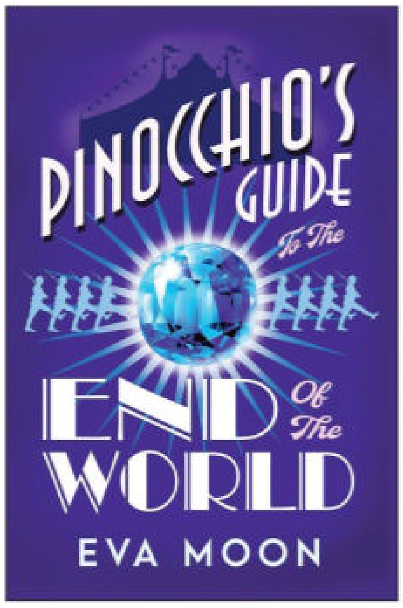
SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

Pinocchio's Guide to the End of the World

Eva Moon | Falling Moon Productions

312p, e-book, $12.99, ISBN 979-8-986-92632-2



Playwright and musician Moon's richly inventive debut novel proves as enchanting—and as darkly surprising—as the original fairytale from which it takes inspiration. Moon has structured the story as an interview, conducted in 1993, with the retired real Pinocchio, a puppet turned "real boy" turned Fascist-belting hero whose romances and adventures among real 20th century figures will quite literally change history, all as he faces a magical mystery and threat involving the Blue Lady who granted him his wish—and who has brought life to other marionettes, known as Blues. Meanwhile, rumors abound of vicious "Manikins" hunting Blues, possibly created by and working for enemies of the Blue Lady … or even that brutal new chancellor of Germany, Hitler.

Told in engaging, conversational style ("I thought of the Fascists, the Nazis, the Manikins. Evil was eating up Europe like a plague of rats.") Pinocchio's narrative blends revisionist historical fiction with playful fabulist elements and dead-serious stakes. It's a fairy tale for adults that doesn't blink at the real world's harshness or cheapen historical atrocities when lacing in the fantastic. Moon's riffing on the source material has thematic integrity—after Pinocchio loses a flesh-and-blood leg in the Italian army in World War I, his "papa" Gepetto fashions a wooden replacement for the one-time marionette, an accommodation that informs the rest of a life. That life that finds him exploring as a sailor and a puppeteer, experiencing love and loss, and, crucially, daring to face the dangers of fascism on the rise.

Pinocchio and the "Blue underground" relishes the fight, but he's no two-fisted pulp hero. "I wasn't a natural-born human, and I never would be no matter how many stars I wished on," this wounded hero declares. But he's also, in his ways, as human as it comes, as Moon's fantasy showcases the heart it takes to stand up for what's best in us all as that evil threatens to swallow the world.

The surprising story of Pinocchio taking on fascism, written with polish and playful power.

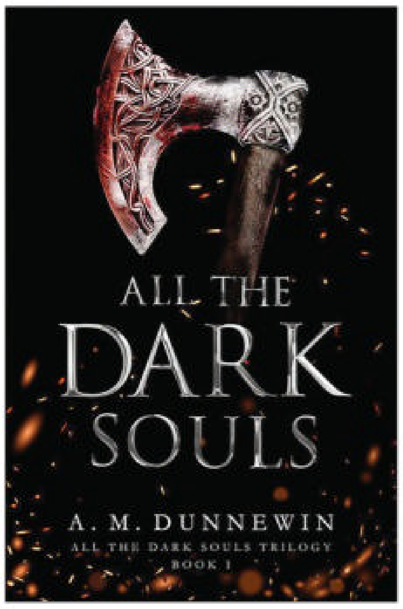
Great for fans of Amanda Leduc's *The Centaur's Wife*, Julie Berry's *Lovely War.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

All the Dark Souls

A. M. Dunnewin | Dark Hour Press, LLC
202p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 978-1-952-57702-4



Dunnewin mashes genres in her suspenseful dark fantasy with a strong dose of romance. Joss Brevyn is known as the "Angel of Death." She comes from a long line of executioners, forced to perform the gruesome task despite their pleas for a pardon from the king. As the town outcast, Joss accepts her fate, lives a quiet life alongside her assistant Henrik, and finds peace pursuing her passion as a healer. Then, a mysterious stranger enters her life and disrupts the balance she's fought hard to preserve. Beaten and left on the side of the road for dead, assassin Aric Kayden accepts Joss's help and hospitality and stays with her while he recuperates. As romantic tension builds between them, Joss is tasked with an important execution while Aric is visited by a masked villain. Each has an ominous duty to fulfill, but at what cost?

The dichotomy of Joss's jobs creates a compelling dynamic. On the one hand, she's tasked with killing, yet at her core, she desires nothing more than a simple calm life working her land and helping people. Her softness balances the cruelty of her duties as executioner, which allows readers to connect with her vulnerability. Equally compelling is Aric, who also is employed as a killer. On the surface, he appears confident and suave, but Joss's kindness chips away at his outward persona and finds within him the desire to become a better man. The two complement each other in an endearing fashion as a sweet romance blooms.

Readers get a heavy dose of Joss's backstory told through dialogue which may make some conversations between her and Aric seem a bit dense; however, the story building and character development lay a solid foundation for future adventures within the series. Dark fantasy fans who enjoy romance and action will find this to be a pleasurable read.

A female executioner and a male assassin cross paths in a romantic dark fantasy filled with action.

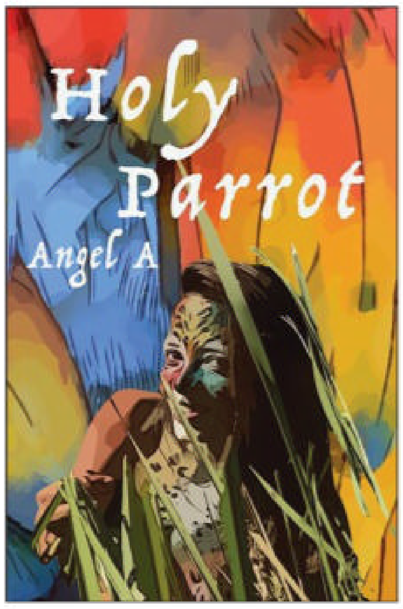
Great for fans of Laura Kat Young's *The Butcher*, Donna Fletcher's *The King's Executioner.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Holy Parrot

Angel A | Angel's Leap
270p, e-book, $5.99, ISBN 978-0-987-62226-6



Angel A's bold second novel, after *Mary Poser*, chronicles Australian research student Leonard Lumière's head-spinning time in Buritaca, on Colombia's Caribbean coast, and a case of parrot-proclaimed divinity. Maria Santos, 16 and claiming to be a pregnant virgin seeks refuge in Leo's lab after escaping her father Gustavo's violent reaction to the news. Gabriel, Maria's "holy parrot," attests that Maria is nothing less than the mother of a new savior. As news of the pregnancy spreads, people belonging to different religions arrive in the tiny village to seek Maria's blessings. Robin O'Leary, a mythologist, guides Maria to 'channel' Gabriel's divine messages, turning her into a spiritual leader and healer. Among Maria's detractors is her former boyfriend Pablo's family. When the divine parrot disappears, Maria's life too seems to be in danger.

In smooth and polished prose, Angel A compellingly examines the myriad and sometimes opposing ways in which humans deal with the challenges of life and faith, questioning our over reliance on science and scientific methods and our doubt and distrust about more traditional streams of knowledge, especially those of non-European origin. Leo is the skeptical man of science, a "sucker for certainty" always looking for proof. In contrast is Robin, the mystic whose mind is attuned to the mysterious and unfathomable, searching for a religion that will bring all believers together. In between is Maria, sweet, innocent and trusting with wells of strength and power she never knew she possessed.

Angel A achieves the tricky feat of exploring the clash of different belief systems through an engaging plotline and the thoughtful interactions of an agreeable cast. The plot moves forward at a brisk pace, despite the heady questions, and the characters are well-etched and entirely believable. The premise might sound fantastical, but each twist of the story proves plausible and revealing, while several burning questions simmer strongly enough to keep the pages turning.

Readers fascinated by questions of faith and belief will enjoy this probing novel.

Great for fans of Diane Schoemperlen's *Our Lady of the Lost and Found*, Anne Ostby's *Pieces of Happiness.*

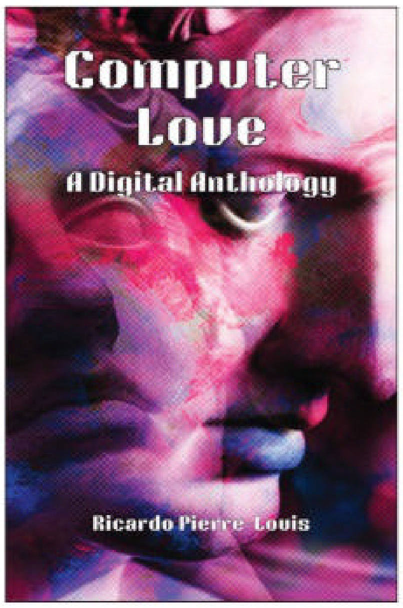
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Computer Love: A Digital Anthology

Ricardo Pierre Louis

124p, mass market, $15, ISBN 978-1-087-91329-2



Delving into love, loss, and the lengths humans will go through to hold on to the things of importance in their lives, this imaginative debut story collection explores an array of relationships, especially the familial, the romantic, and our complex ones with habits and addictions. Like contemporary life, Pierre Louis's entertaining stories cross themes and genres, with elements of romance and science fiction, as they develop engaging casts and plots—and their fears, desires, and dilemmas create a crucial sense of connection between readers and characters. Stories like "The Guardian," in which Theodore Gershwin, a grieving father, creates a protection and surveillance system that allows the population to monitor the world around them, connect to of-the-moment anxieties while escalating tension and building to satisfying—often unexpected—conclusions.

"Marley's Mom" is the story of a young boy who only wants to sit on the couch and watch reruns with his mother, but she's too busy to spend quality time with him—and his wish finally comes true with a certain finality. In "Mr. Lewis & the Lucky Zebra," a young gambler who knows his math tries his luck gambling at the Lucky Zebra. After crapping out and owing the casino a large debt, he makes a deal with the owner to settle by "operating" one of the machines. Adrian quickly learns to never bet against the house. Highly entertaining and creative, these stories will pull readers in with clear, suspenseful situations that resonate.

Pierre Louis writes crisp, clear prose that wastes few words. Dialogue is sharp, and the sense of place in a story like "Lake Shore Drive" is poignantly tangible: "The cars with the biggest rims, flashiest lights, and curviest curves slowly rolled past. The machines seduced and called out like they were in heat." This character-driven, idea-rich collection exploring complex conceptions of love is a quick, engaging read despite its thoughtful seriousness, and a few stories that end abruptly.

An imaginative anthology that explores love while incorporating elements of science fiction.

Great for fans of N.K. Jemisin's *How Long 'Til Black Future Month*, Dahlia Adler's *His Hideous Heart.*

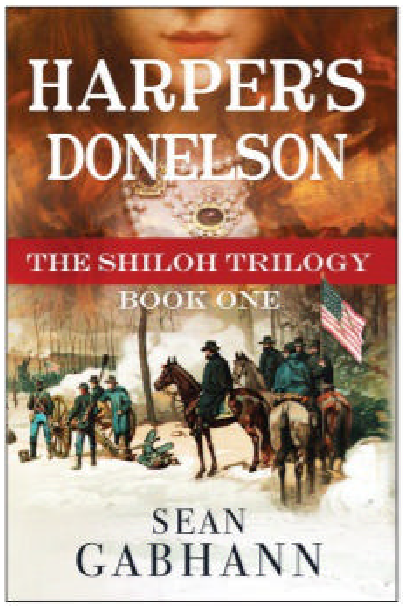
PRODUCTION GRADES:
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Harper's Donelson: A Novel of Grant's First Campaign, Second Edition

Sean Gabhann | Natchez Trail Press

365p, hardcover, $29.99, ISBN 978-1-7343974-6-8



In this sweeping story, the first of his Shiloh Trilogy, Gabhann follows General Grant's early Civil War campaigns through the eyes of Lieutenant James Harper of the First Iowa Volunteers. Harper, fresh out of a skirmish in which he helped save Grant's life, but lost the trust of his men in the process, finds himself denied a command position and answering to Colonel Monroe, who's holding a grudge against Harper, convinced he should be discharged. Despite the cards being stacked against him, Harper's sure of his military prowess and willing to serve as Monroe's adjutant, as long as he has a shot at a command post in the future.

Gabhann compellingly captures the neighbor-turned-enemy spirit of the Civil War in the complex relationships between his characters and their duties. Harper staunchly disapproves of the Abolitionists, blaming them for the entire war, but he's loyal to the Union—and to General Grant. Meanwhile, his short fuse repeatedly lands him in hot water, and even his friendly brothers-in-arms find his swagger hard to stomach. Harper's growth makes for an exciting read, especially when a scouting mission goes south and Harper finds himself a prisoner of war, along with several of his men who still aren't sure they can depend on him. Ultimately, Harper channels his recklessness to pull through for his fellow soldiers, winning their confidence just as the higher chain of command starts head hunting him again, but this time he's not alone, as Grant has just been relieved of duty as well, by the infamous General Halleck.

Fans of Civil War fiction will relish the battle details and intricate military hierarchy that makes and breaks key skirmishes. The milieu and dialogue is convincing, though Gabhann takes a storyteller's creative license with his characters. A parallel story of a naïve prostitute trying to survive never fully connects to Harper's narrative, but the ending sets the stage to watch the two come together in a future volume.

A hotheaded Union officer faces battles, prison, and his own shortcomings in this sweeping Civil War novel.

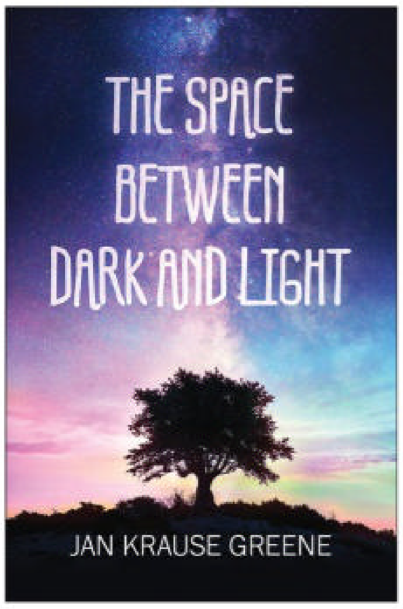
Great for fans of Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*, Howard Bahr's *The Black Flower.*

PRODUCTION GRADES:
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

The Space Between Dark and Light

Jan Krause Greene | Jaxon Meadows Publishing
260p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-215-08835-7



This ambitious novel from Greene invests readers in parallel plots unfolding simultaneously on the page but a century apart for the characters—one in the present, and the other in a near-future of eco catastrophe, where society has collapsed and people will kill for water. In the present, readers meet Joe Geist, who is looking for his lost brother Jared, a search in which he's being helped by journalist Anne Miller and an unhoused man by the name of W.H. Davies. A century from now, there is George, a seven-year-old boy who flees his home when it is invaded by raiders and sets out to find his lost sister. The stories seem strangely interconnected as *The Space Between Dark and Light* moves between them. The mystery becomes not just what will happen to Greene's compellingly drawn characters, but what does George's future have to do with today?

Right from the start, Greene has a firm grasp over the dual plotline, as each chapter shifts between Joe and George's point of view. The suspense works, and readers find themselves guessing and theorizing about possible connections. Greene does a great job building characters, imbuing each with intriguing peculiarities and relatable emotions. She also deftly handles scenes of action that stir tension, shock, and that trickiest of narrative qualities: an immediate sense of what-next? momentum.

The ending, though, doesn't quite live up to the beautifully assured buildup, as the final pages offer much summarizing and moralizing. Still, the novel has a gripping plot, twists that will keep readers intrigued, and a chilling glimpse of a possible future where "Sometimes, only the children get to eat. Most days everyone gets water." Lovers of futuristic novels and climate fiction will enjoy this book, which is as thrilling as it is frighteningly relevant.

A time-crossed climate fiction story as thrilling as it is urgently relevant.

Great for fans of
Pitchaya Sudbanthad's *Bangkok Wakes to Rain*, Kate Mascarenhas's *The Psychology Of Time Travel.*

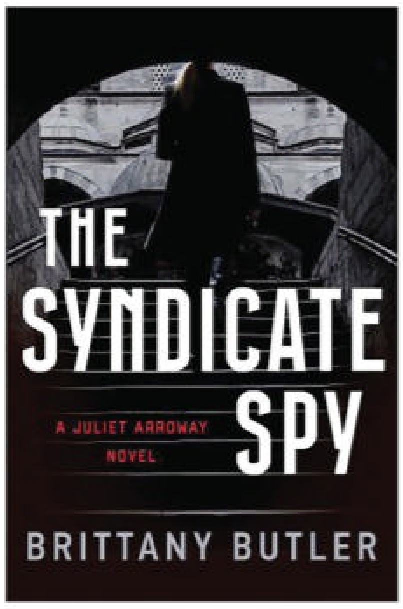
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

EDITOR'S PICK

The Syndicate Spy: A Juliet Arroway Novel

Brittany Butler | Greenleaf Book Group Press
304p, hardcover, $28.95, ISBN 979-8-886-45024-8



Butler hits the ground running with her thriller debut, an electrifying near-future series-starter that pits intelligence operative Juliet Arroway, her Saudi princess partner in espionage, and a Syndicate of intelligence agencies against the terrorists of a post-oil world. In Juliet's case, the latest threat in the ongoing energy war has a personal edge: her father, a Syndicate agent, was a casualty of the war against al-Alfatih, a terrorist organization targeting alternative energy sites. A wave of attacks bring fresh tragedy to Juliet—and cast suspicion on her trusted partner, Mariam, the daughter of the king of Saudi Arabia, whose family might be involved in al-Alfatih despite the Kingdom's recent investment in renewable energies.

In Juliet, Butler has crafted a compelling, independent-minded protagonist who's adept at tradecraft and ready for bold action, as the genre demands, but also possessed of unusual depth. She agonizes over having to keep her job and the danger she faces from the man she loves, and she's quick to push back against the xenophobia of intelligence salts, asking one, after dressing him down for his anti-Muslim invective, "Why is it that women are ball-busters and men are just doing their jobs?" Mariam, too, is a standout creation, a woman eager to see "an end to the cycle of death" but whose loyalties get questioned.

The richness that Butler brings to character also distinguishes *The Syndicate Spy*'s portrayal of a new global order—and new threats. The geopolitics are convincingly complex, with antagonists who feel refreshingly human, but Butler still conjures a grabber of a thriller plot centered on a formula for "synthetic oil" that many interested parties will kill for. Pulsing throughout is the persistent question of who Juliet can trust. Action is exciting and never punishing, though occasionally wordy; the dash of romance feels natural, a welcome respite from the tension. Readers who favor smart, twisty spy thrillers with a sense of hope and humanity will love this.

This smart near-future espionage thriller introduces a heroine readers will love.

Great for fans of
Rosalie Knecht, Dana Haynes.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Sandi Jacobs

Aaliyah D. Murphy

254p, hardcover, $20, ISBN 978-1-535-61784-0

SANDI JACOBS
AALIYAH D. MURPHY

"All I could see was schizophrenia, waiting for the right moment to strike," Murphy writes, deep into this relentless fiction debut. The bluntly declarative pitch of those lines captures the spirit of Sandi Jacobs, a pained, often incoherent surge of shocking incidents, unreliable narration, and fleeting moments of human connection. The story's told by the young woman of the title, whose diagnosis about a third of the way through the book, and subsequent hospitalization, casts a new light on the wild drama and violence that precedes it. As she bounces in and out of mental institutions—going "back and forth for so long that they started to feel like field trips"—Sandi is gaslit, abused, betrayed by others, and must face schizophrenia itself, personified in harrowing scenes.

"Harrowing" is the term for *Sandi Jacobs*, a novel that rarely lets up its disorienting swirl of terrors, coming so fast that readers will wonder whether they truly happened or whether Sandi imagines them: when Dustin, the 19 year old who has impregnated Sandi's 15 year-old sister, abducts elementary-aged Sandi from a boarding school where she's giving a presentation in Italian, is he really chased by cartoonish thugs who call him a "cracker"? Does Dustin, at 19, truly rent cars and board airplanes with a blood-soaked little girl in tow?

In the climax, some of these unreliable details—like her teen sister's bizarrely well-paid job cleaning a library—accumulate into a mystery Sandi must decide whether to face. But in the moment they're merely confusing rather than suggestive, as the storytelling throughout is rarely controlled or convincing. The fevered narrative reads like a draft rather than a polished book as it bucks wildly, leaping in time and perspective with little warning, so much so that little clues don't get a chance to seed, grow, and entice. Still, there's raw power in the language, welcome interludes of warmth with a boy named Callum, and some of the jolting plot twists are inspired in concept, if rushed in execution.

A disorienting gush of a novel that dares readers to keep up with its young narrator's mind.

Great for fans of
Francesca Zappia's *Made You Up*, An Na's *The Place Between Breaths.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **C-** | Marketing copy: **B**

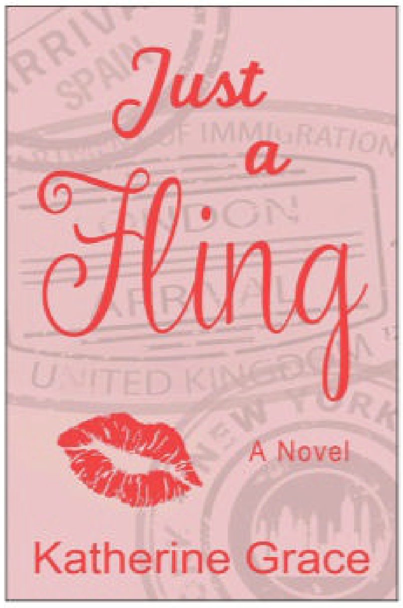
ROMANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

Just a Fling

Katherine Grace | The Wild Rose Press

312p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 978-1-5092-4586-4



Grace's steamy tale follows Dawn and Callan as they discover love's ability to transform their past, dreams, and future. Dawn, a law student studying abroad in Cambridge, falls for Callan, a local Brit and the CEO of a solar tech company, at their first meeting. The two hit it off immediately, and what begins as a summer fling quickly turns serious—until Callan, fighting his guilt over the traumatic loss of his ex-wife and daughter, gets cold feet. The two drift apart, returning to their respective lives, but a chance encounter reignites their passion and triggers the potential for a future together.

Grace skillfully captures the complexity of love, exploring a strong will-they-or-won't-they connection. The story sustains that energy through Dawn and Callan's personal—and professional—ups and downs. When the two throw themselves into work as an antidote for their longing, fate steps in to deal them a twist: Callan's company hires Dawn's firm, forcing them to face the truth of their attraction. With that move, Grace breathes new life into Dawn and Callan's relationship, and this time they're determined not to lose each other, even if it means they must face their pasts and futures head-on. The vulnerability both are willing to endure is inspiring, particularly Callan's trauma that both threatens their tenuous reunion and is soothed by his attraction to Dawn.

This romance is a perfect match for readers who relish undeniable chemistry, complex characters, and intimate passion. Every plot point feels compelling and earned, and Grace's writing is witty and perfectly paced, leaving room for the immersive case amid the page-turning storyline. Both leads experience personal growth as an outward manifestation of their support for one another, and although Callan and Dawn's initial attraction is exciting, the growth of their flirtation into a deep connection is relatable and accurate to lived experience. This is a knockout romance.

This stellar romance captures love in the midst of the intricacies of healing.

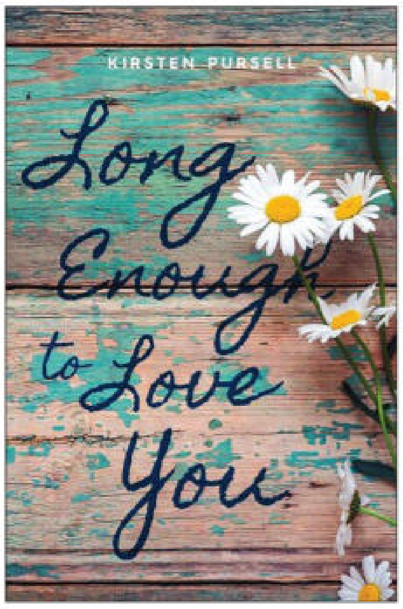
Great for fans of Emily Henry's *Book Lovers*, Helen Hoang's *The Kiss Quotient.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

ROMANCE

Long Enough to Love You

Kirsten Pursell | Atmosphere Press
252p, trade paper, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-639-88755-2



Pursell (*Company Clown*) merges romance and self-discovery in this appealing contemplation of the "parts and pieces" that comprise a life story. Jenn, facing an empty nest when her youngest child heads off to college, is lost in regret over her secure—but lukewarm—marriage to Mark. When she attempts to ask Mark for space, she's hit with the sudden death of her mother, and the torrent of family secrets that emerge in the aftermath threaten not only her childhood memories, but also her identity as a grown woman. In her hunt for answers, Jenn stumbles across diaries from her youth—diaries that light a long forgotten spark she thought was extinguished years ago.

Jenn's quest for meaning will resonate with any woman looking back on her life—or wondering what the future may hold. Her struggle to come to grips with a lack of purpose is powerful, as is the dissonance when she recalls past flings and compares them to her safe, predictable marriage. After deciding to reconnect with Tripp, her steamy summer hookup after her senior year of high school, Jenn unlocks the door to her past and sets off a series of explosive moments, between herself and Tripp as well as with Mark, who's trying his best to rekindle what may have never truly existed. Suddenly Jenn's faced with more passion than she ever imagined, balanced by an equal share of heartache, and in the midst, she wonders how to find "the freedom to be okay to experiment and explore the world again."

The idea of finding yourself by losing yourself is intriguing here, and Jenn's willingness to sacrifice comfort for intensity is equally courageous and risky. Ultimately that gamble pays off, and she's granted a second chance at unrestrained love, but the overriding message that wholeness can be formed from imperfection is the essence that will stick with readers.

A reflective story of self-discovery, second chances, and daring to take a chance.

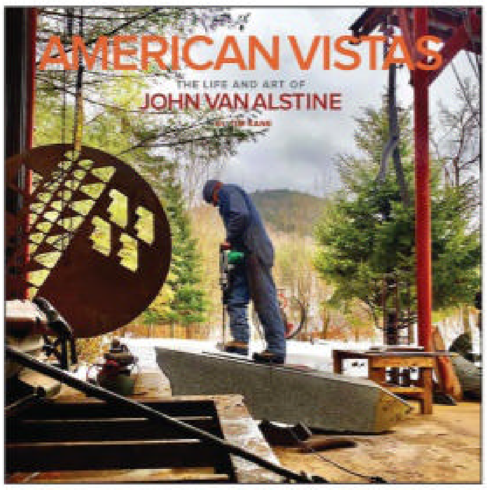
Great for fans of Robyn Carr's *Never Too Late*, Lucy Score's *The Last Second Chance.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

American Vistas: The Life and Art of John Van Alstine

Tim Kane | Clovercroft Publishing
256p, hardcover, $75, ISBN 978-1-954-43781-4



Spanning five decades and offering a wealth of illustrations and insights, *American Vistas* by Kane, biographer of prolific sculptor John Van Alstine, is an extension and companion piece to *John Van Alstine: Sculpture 1971-2018* and *American Vistas,* published in 2020 by The Artist Book Foundation. It surveys the arc of Van Alstine's professional and personal growth from the early '70s to the present, including the revolutionary changes to his work during COVID. However, this updated catalog and biography also functions as a standalone summary of Van Alstine's place in the intersection of various genres of sculpture, including constructivism, cubism, brutalism, and, perhaps unexpectedly, the American landscape tradition.

Kane's comprehensive inventory of Van Alstine's work is an odyssey of sculpture through America and the past 50 years, which took the artist through upstate New York, Ohio, Wyoming, Maine, Washington, D.C., and New Jersey and exposed him to the limitless variety of the American landscape, both urban and rural, and showed him a medium universally American: stone and steel. Kane's volume aptly displays Van Alstine's aesthetically and kinetically protean artistic eras, but this dedication to the dichotomy of stone and steel, symbolizing nature and humanity, wilderness and industry, is present throughout *American Vistas* and Van Alstine's work as a whole.

The author includes hundreds of photographs of Van Alstine's sculptures interspersed with biographical descriptions, analyses of the pieces and the periods they belong to, with special attention to the Pyxis Awry and Sisyphus, series and COVID-conceived works such as "The Arc of Covid is Long, But it Bends Toward Science," and excerpts from recent interviews with the sculptor and his loved ones. The mixed-media format allows for a three-dimensional version of Van Alstine to rise from the pages—an extraordinary artist, nature-loving tinkerer, father, husband, and, above all, American.

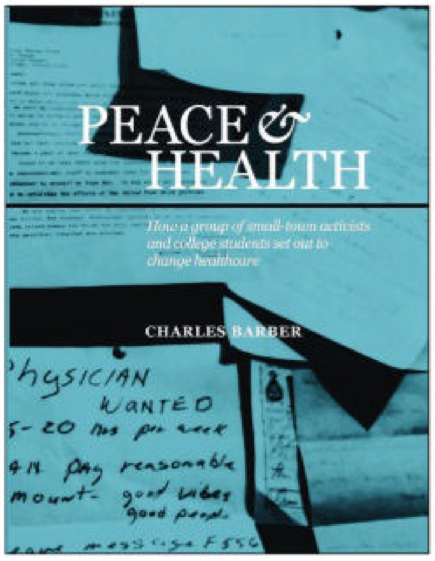
A comprehensive catalog of American sculptor John Van Alstine's work and life.

Great for fans of Tom Moran, Tim Kane, and John Van Alstine's *John Van Alstine;Richard Serra Sculpture 1985-1998.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: A | Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

Peace & Health: How a Group of Small-Town Activists and College Students Set out to Change Healthcare


PEACE & HEALTH
How a group of small-town activists and college students set out to change healthcare
CHARLES BARBER
Physician Wanted

Charles Barber | OctoberWorks and Community Health Center, Inc
178p, e-book, $28.99, ISBN 978-1-959-26202-2

Barber (*Comfortably Numb: How Psychiatry Is Medicating a Nation*) tells a rousing story of citizen disruption centered on the Community Health Center (CHC) in Middletown, Connecticut. Starting from a small free dental clinic, the CHC grew into a free health care institution serving thousands each year and having a positive impact on people—and other nonprofits inspired by its success—across the country. Although it faced opposition from the medical establishment, political leaders, and what Barber identifies as its home state's "steady habits," the CHC overcame these challenges to provide care for many people who desperately needed it. The book closes with a description of the CHC's work in managing and staffing mass vaccination clinics for COVID-19, which Barber sees as proof of the institution's continued ability to treat patients with a "consuming relentlessness."

Barber centers the story on the contributions, philosophy, and organizational skills of Mark Masselli, who founded CHC at age 22 and eventually saw it flourish, but he also describes the many other people who have contributed to the success of the institution over the years, from Lillian Reba Moses, a leader in the Middletown community and long-time board member, to Margaret Flinter, a nurse practitioner who joined CHC in 1980 and transformed its clinical care. *Peace & Health* is rich in illustrations, providing strong visual appeal to go along with the compelling story.

The story of the CHC is, in many ways, the story of the free clinic movement in America—from its founding as one of a wave of clinics to the Community Development Block Grant program and its eventual status as a Federally Qualified Health Center (and FQHC Look-Alike). Barber does an excellent job sharing the CHC's history—and its vision of health care as a right. A reader interested in the history of free clinics, or health care in general, will find *Peace & Health* fascinating and inspiring.

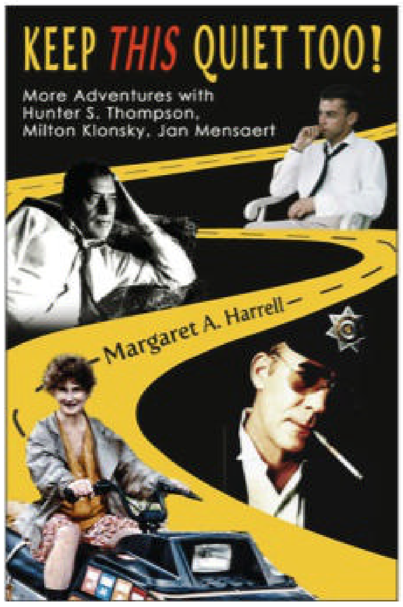
The fascinating story of Connecticut's Community Health Center, a visionary free clinic.

Great for fans of Gregory L. Weiss's *Grassroots Medicine*, Catherine Mas's *Culture in the Clinic.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MEMOIR

Keep THIS Quiet Too!: More Adventures with Hunter S. Thompson, Milton Klonsky, Jan Mensaert


KEEP THIS QUIET TOO!
More Adventures with Hunter S. Thompson, Milton Klonsky, Jan Mensaert
Margaret A. Harrell

Margaret A. Harrell | Saeculum University Press
283p, hardcover, $21.99, ISBN 979-8-9871061-1-2

"I'm not crazier than you," Harrell reports once saying to her friend Hunter S. Thompson. Thompson's response: "No, but you talk crazier." That exchange, recounted in an introductory author's note, kicks off the second in a series of memoirs (after *Keep This Quiet!*) by Harrell that examine her relationship with three fascinating men of letters: first that gonzo icon Thompson, for whom Harrell served as an editor at Random House and maintained a friendship with through his years of covering horse races and regatas, and Milton Klonsky, the beat writer who was her literary and spiritual advisor. Finally, there is the poet Jan Mensaert, her troubled husband, whose struggle with drugs, alcohol, and mental illness overshadowed his considerable artistic abilities.

With an eye for surprising detail, Harrell conjures a charged and vivid milieu, even as the story she tells is often painful. She recounts time and again striving to salvage her marriage and rescue her husband from his addictions and secure treatment for his mental illness, as she travels to Morocco, Switzerland, New York, and her home state of North Carolina. Her friendship with Klonsky provides a wellspring of inspiration, and she persuasively evangelizes his essay collection *A Discourse on Hip*. Through it all, Harrell, a seeker, experiments with and endorses an idiosyncratic mix of religions, new age beliefs, and science.

These spiritual and metaphysical excursions, while essential to her story and a key element of the Beat ethos, at times distract from her abundant enticing experiences and insights, and her relationships with her subjects. Still, readers fascinated by these men, her world, and numerology and transcendentalism will find themselves on a journey with grand destinations throughout the globe and within the author's consciousness.

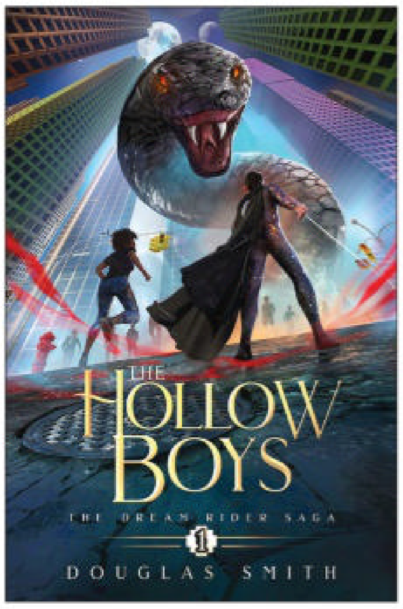
A seeker's memoir of life with poets, spirituality, and Hunter S. Thompson.

Great for fans of Peter Richardson's *Savage Journey*, Diane di Prima's *Memoirs of a Beatnik.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK



The Hollow Boys: The Dream Rider Saga, Book 1

Douglas Smith | Spiral Path Books
382p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 978-1-928-04826-8

This arresting series kickoff from Smith (*The Wolf at the End of the World*) grips from the start as it introduces its inventive milieu, its flawed but fantastically powered hero, its playful worldbuilding, and a host of tantalizing mysteries. In contemporary Toronto, billionaire 18-year-old Will Dreycott lives in a white tower, hunting for his missing parents, laboring over the impossibly successful comic book series, and, in secret, actually living his superhero creation's life. As the real-life Dream Rider, Will is a costumed crusader in the dreamscape, searching for evidence of missing children, fleeing nightmarish emotions called Emojis, and eventually encountering creepy gray children he'll learn are called "Hollow Boys"—missing Toronto street kids who, through elaborate witchery, have been stripped of their will and forced to take on this terrifying new form.

That's just the start of Smith's vigorously imaginative scenario. Complicating matters is Will's agoraphobia. The boy who seems to have everything, including the wealth to make individual floors of his building museum-quality recreations of Paris and Egypt, can't bring himself to breathe outside air. That's a fascinating flaw, worthy of Marvel comics in the 1960s, a trait the deliciously detestable villains will of course exploit. Smith draws a telling contrast between Will and the broke-but-free life of Case, a street teen whom Will meets, develops a crush on, and vows to help—but can't follow outside his tower.

Strange, often appealing creatures (like the delightful doogles) and characters fill out Will's world, and the Hollow Boys, Maras, Emojis, and other original dangers have a perfectly calibrated creepiness—they're deadly, and scenes of action and suspense thrum with tension, but the novel's still always fun. Pacing and prose are tight despite the novel's generous length; the dialogue's crisp and engaging, and the reversals and revelations are cleverly plotted. Smith takes every advantage of his original dreamworld's possibilities, building to a satisfying ending with plenty of mystery left to explore.

Thrilling YA fantasy whose billionaire teen superhero flies through dreams but can't step outside.

Great for fans of Maggie Stiefvater's *The Dream Thieves*, Robert Jackson Bennett.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

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“Spying is not the one-man (or one-woman) show that most of what we see and read would have us believe.”

Emotional Intelligence

A CIA officer turned author argues it’s time for real female spies to get their due

By Brittany Butler

When you work at the CIA, you’re taught to keep everything you do secret. You must be invisible. As a woman who grew up in a patriarchal family, I was not unfamiliar with the imperative. So it felt dicey when I decided to make public that I worked at the CIA and was writing a book on the subject. Being exposed and vulnerable was unsettling, but with this exposure also came freedom.

I started working at the CIA shortly after 9/11. In the years that followed, there was an immediacy and relevance to the counterterrorism mission that is difficult to quantify. In 2005, I was assigned to support the CIA’s mission in Iraq. As a CIA targeting officer, my days were spent hunting elusive high-value targets, which typically meant high-ranking members of a Sunni extremist group.

In 2010, I graduated to hunting targets in the CIA’s Pakistan Afghanistan division—not just in support of the CIA’s capture/kill operations but also targeting for the potential recruitment of sources. These were challenging tasks in my 20s and early 30s—navigating both the war zones in the Middle East and the male-dominated vaults at Langley.

On one trip to the Middle East to debrief a terrorist we were trying to recruit as a source, I was told to let my male counterparts do the talking. This entailed describing me as an “expert from Washington” and a married, pious woman who took her faith very seriously. When I asked the reason for this backstory, my male colleagues said it was because the source had never met an American woman and that his idea of an American woman came from TV and movies.

At first I was appalled, but then I began to understand. This was when the TV show *Homeland* was wildly popular, in which Claire Danes plays a CIA officer with bipolar disorder who sleeps with the terrorist she is hunting. Similarly, *Red Sparrow*, starring Jennifer Lawrence as a Russian spy, shows the actor nakedly taunting one of the male trainees to prove that she’s unafraid to use her body in exchange for information. This was a widespread misconception among those inside and outside the agency about women at the CIA that I had to fight against constantly.

But it’s not all Hollywood’s fault. Mata Hari, who was convicted of seducing French men and spying for Germany during WWI, remains one of the most infamous female spies in history. Movies like *Zero Dark Thirty* staring Jessica Chastain, depicting the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden, did a much better job, having resisted the temptation to reduce female spies into dominatrices who exchange sex for information.

My book is not a memoir; it is fiction based on fact. I did this not only to disguise the CIA’s sources and methods but also to tell the more compelling and true story of the moral and social struggles within espionage—stories people don’t hear. My upcoming thriller, *The Syndicate Spy*, sheds necessary light on what makes female intelligence officers truly unique in the recruitment and handling of spies and dispels some of the stereotypes propagated by some television shows, films, and other spy novels.

Spying is not the one-man (or one-woman) show that most of what we see and read would have us believe: it’s the work of many committed individuals, all playing their vital roles to bring about the demise of America’s foes and provide intelligence to our policymakers. In *The Syndicate Spy*, the three main characters—Juliet, Graham, and Mariam—grapple with their roles as spies in a fictional war. Juliet struggles to overcome grief and end the war that cost her father his life. Graham must forget about a burned source that turned up dead because of his careless spycraft. And Mariam, a Saudi princess, must decide whether or not to turn her back on her family in order to achieve a better future for women in the Arab world. All of these are struggles that I witnessed while I was at the CIA—the only difference is that they are fighting in a fictional (albeit believable) energy war.

When people ask how I got into the CIA, I emphasize that I did not have a fancy Ivy League education, nor was I the daughter of a diplomat. What I did possess was a strong work ethic and a high degree of emotional intelligence. By “emotional intelligence,” I mean the ability to gauge both a source’s veracity and their willingness to work with the CIA—something I believe women are better qualified to judge than men.

Over the years, we’ve heard a lot about the James Bonds, Jason Bournes, and Gabriel Allons of spy fiction. While highly entertaining and well done, it’s time for a different kind of spy story—one in which a real female spy emerges from the shadows to tell her tale. ■

Brittany Butler spent nine years as a CIA officer. Her debut thriller, The Syndicate Spy, *will be published on March 21 by Greenleaf Book Group.*

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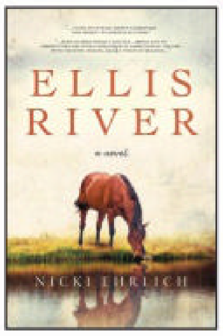
FICTION



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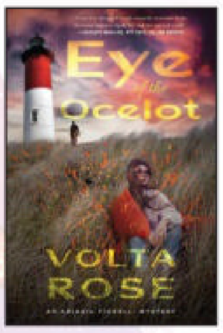

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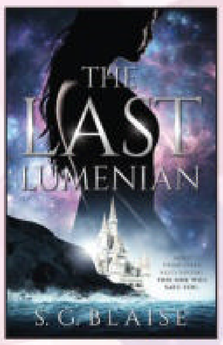

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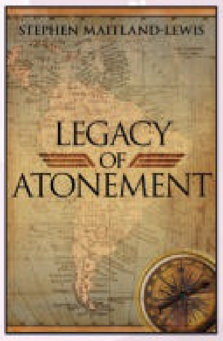

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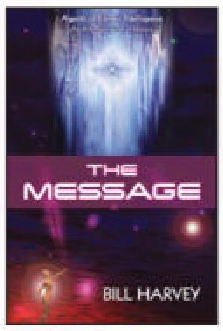

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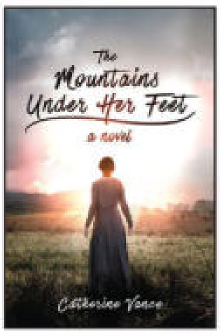

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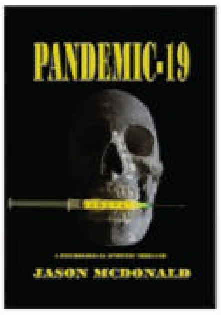

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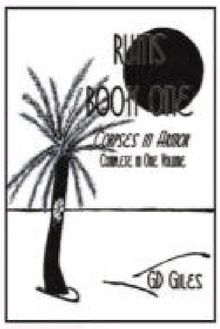

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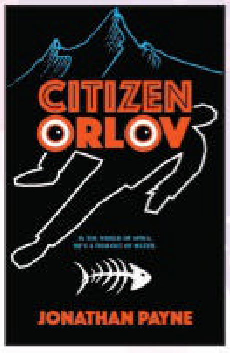

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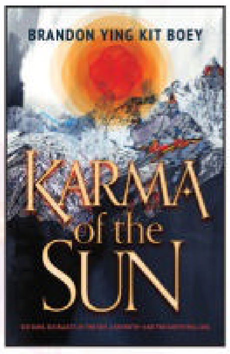

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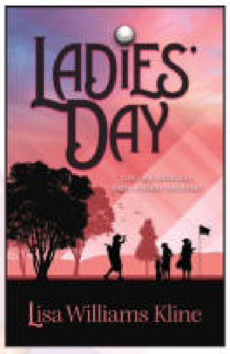

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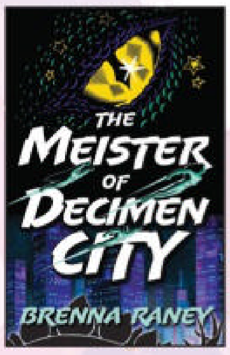

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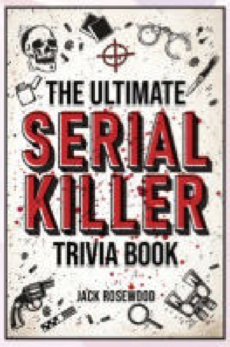

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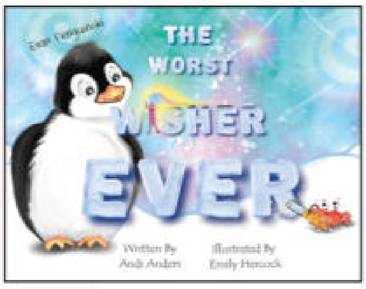

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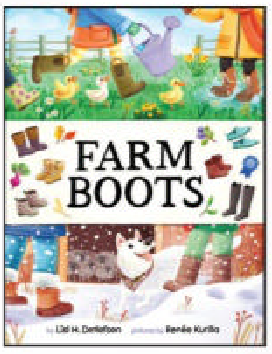

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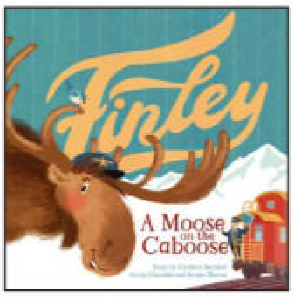

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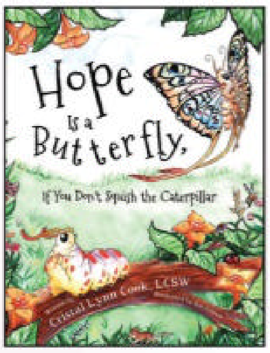

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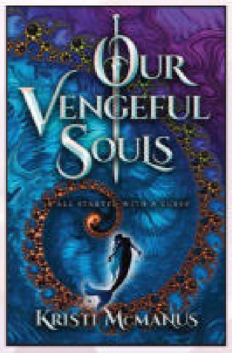

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